

[2015 Session] Create an Advisory Committee to Examine the State Jail System and Make Recommendations for Its Improvement

Policy Background:

Texas' state jail system, created in 1993, was originally intended to divert individuals with nonviolent offenses from crowded prisons and provide them rehabilitative assistance. However, individuals sentenced to state jail facilities have extremely limited access to treatment and programming options, and typically have no post-release supervision.^[1] As a result, state jail releasees have the highest rates of re-arrest and re-incarceration among returning populations.

While policy-makers and stakeholders recognize the need to improve the state jail system, more information is necessary to implement meaningful changes that will have a lasting impact.

Texas policy-makers should require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to convene a volunteer advisory panel to study the problems facing the state jail system, and recommend how Texas can minimize recidivism rates and better provide opportunities for holistic rehabilitation to those with low-level offenses. The advisory panel should be comprised of legislators, probation chiefs, prosecutors, defense attorneys, advocates, criminal law experts, and individuals formerly involved in the state jail system.

Key Facts:

- 30.7% of individuals released from a state jail in FY 2011 (measured through FY 2013) were re-incarcerated. By way of comparison, 21.4% of individuals released from prison in FY 2011 (measured through FY 2013) were re-incarcerated, and an average 15% of individuals on felony direct supervision (probation) were revoked from FY 2009 to FY 2014.^[2]
- As of August 2014, there were nearly 11,000 individuals on hand in a state jail facility (7% of all individuals incarcerated), 87% of whom were incarcerated for a nonviolent property or drug offense.^[3]

- Incarcerating one person in state jail costs taxpayers \$47.30 per day.^[4] Incarcerating all 11,000 individuals costs \$520,300 per day, or nearly \$190 million annually.

Relevant Bill:

- **Bill Number:** [HB 2448](#) (White, James)
Bill Caption: Relating to the creation of an advisory committee to examine the state jail system within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.
TCJE Materials: [Fact Sheet](#)
Hearing Notice: House Corrections Committee, [Notice of Public Hearing on April 23, 2015](#)
Archived Hearing Video: House Corrections Committee, [04/23/15 Video](#) [TCJE testimony begins at 01:18:03]

[1] Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), *Statistical Report: Fiscal Year (FY) 2014*, p. 34; http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2014.pdf. Of 22,192 total releases from state jails in FY 2014, 81 people (0.4%) were released to community supervision.

[2] Legislative Budget Board, *Statewide Criminal and Juvenile Justice Recidivism and Revocation Rates*, February 2015, pp. 3, 7, 8, 16;
http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/Publications/Policy_Report/1450_CJ_Statewide_Recidivism.pdf

[3] TDCJ, *Statistical Report: Fiscal Year 2014*, p. 1.

[4] Legislative Budget Board, *Criminal and Juvenile Justice Uniform Cost Report: Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014*, Submitted to the 84th Legislature, February 2015, p. 4;
http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/Publications/Policy_Report/1440_Criminal_Juvenile_Justice_Uniform_Cost_Report.pdf. State-operated state jail facilities spent \$47.30 per day in FY 2014 to house individuals, while privately operated state jail facilities spent \$30.99 per day in 2014. There are 15 state-operated and 4 privately operated state jail facilities. The numbers above reflect the cost for state-operated facilities.