



## QUESTIONS FOR COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTION NOMINEE

By: Christopher Reinhart, Chief Attorney

### COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTION ([CGS §§ 18-80 AND 18-81](#))

- Must be an experienced correctional administrator.
- Administers the Department of Correction's (DOC) institutions, facilities, and activities.
- Establishes custodial and rehabilitative methods and operates community-based programs.
- Responsible for supervising parolees.
- Establishes disciplinary, treatment, education, training, and other services and programs throughout DOC.
- Arranges legal services for indigent inmates within available appropriations.

### CURRENT ISSUES

1. The prison population reached its highest level in early 2008 with nearly 20,000 inmates. Over the next several years, the population declined significantly and DOC closed a number of prisons. In 2012, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) projected a continued decline in the population but it increased in 2013. As of February 10, 2014, the prison population stands at 16,774 or about 560 inmates more than OPM projected for this month.

- a. Why is the population increasing?
  - b. How is DOC handling the unexpected increase? Are prisons crowded? Is the department housing inmates in non-traditional housing spaces, such as gymnasiums?
  - c. Will the department need to re-open any portion of the recently closed facilities in the near future?
2. Legislation adopted in 2011 allows most inmates to earn risk-reduction credits to reduce their sentences and become eligible for parole sooner by adhering to their offender accountability plans and participating in programs.
  - a. How do you think the credit program is working?
  - b. Are inmates participating in programs? Do the credits provide an effective incentive to participate in programs? Are there enough program slots available to inmates?
  - c. Have the credits affected inmate behavior?
3. Another law adopted in 2011 allows the DOC commissioner to release a sentenced inmate to home confinement if he or she was sentenced for driving under the influence, certain drug crimes, and certain driving without a license crimes.
  - a. How is this law working? How does DOC ensure an inmate remains in his or her home?
  - b. What criteria does DOC use to determine which inmates to release?
  - c. How many inmates released to home confinement are returned to prison for violating conditions of release or committing new crimes?
4. The prison population continues to age and last year DOC and a private provider opened a facility to house inmates in a nursing home-type setting in Rocky Hill.
  - a. How many inmates are currently in this facility?
  - b. What criteria does DOC use to determine whether to send an inmate there?
  - c. Have any inmates sent to the facility been returned to prison for violating facility rules or committing new crimes?

5. DOC opened the January Center at Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Institution in 2012 to house sex offenders and inmates transitioning to the community or on probation. How does DOC use this facility and how does it fit into the state's reentry strategy?
6. Provisional pardons, and proposals related to them, seek to make it easier for offenders to find jobs after they leave prison. What do you think of these proposals and would they help offender reentry?

## **PHILOSOPHY AND BUDGET ISSUES**

1. There has been a long debate over whether prisons should punish, rehabilitate, or do both. Do you believe that rehabilitation can occur in prison and, if so, could it be done more effectively?
2. Budget constraints could affect DOC's programs and services. What do you think needs the most attention? What do you think is the most effective way of dealing with the problem of recidivism?
3. Some have questioned the costs of the UConn Health Center contract to provide inmate health care. Do you think this contract should be opened to bids from the private sector? Are there other ways DOC could reduce inmate health care costs?
4. Inmates are given, or allowed to use, certain things such as televisions, radios, reading materials, weights, and exercise equipment. Some people believe that inmates should not have them. What is your position?
5. The DOC commissioner has the authority to release prisoners sentenced to two years or less to halfway houses, group homes, mental health facilities, or other community correction programs ([CGS § 18-100c](#)). What is your philosophy about releasing prisoners under this authority?
6. How closely does DOC work with the Board of Pardons and Paroles generally, and specifically when determining what is an appropriate plan before an inmate's release? Is there more that could be done to prepare inmates for release?

CR:tjo