

**MINUTES  
LEGISLATIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERSIGHT TASK FORCE  
MEETING**

Friday, March 11, 2016

The Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force met at 10:00 a.m., Friday, March 11, 2016, in the Multi-Complex Building (MAC Room B) in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: Senators Jeremy Hutchinson, Co-Chair, and Joyce Elliott; Representatives Matthew Shepherd, Co-Chair, and Dwight Tosh; Judge Gary Arnold, Mr. Drew Baker, Judge Cristi Beaumont, Mr. Kenton Buckner, Mr. Ken Casady (Cody Hiland), Mr. John Felts, Mr. John Wesley Hall, Mr. Tim Helder, Ms. Wendy Kelley, Mr. Benny Magness, Mr. Steve Newsome, Mr. Robin Raveendran, Ms. Sheila Sharp (Kevin Murphy), and Judge David Talley.

Senator Hutchinson called the meeting to order.

**Action/Requests**

**Approval of the Minutes [Exhibit C]**

Without objection, the Minutes from the February 17, 2016, meeting of the Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force were approved.

**Presentation on Building a Culture of Confidence in Managing Clients/Inmates with Mental Health Issues [Handout 1]**

**Ms. Kendra Stea, Vice President of Partnership, Crisis Prevention Institute, CPI**, presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "*Building a Culture of Confidence*" (see Handout 1 for full report). Ms. Stea discussed current trends and different responses through training within the criminal justice system. She said training is not trending or changing much in the criminal justice system, but subtle shifts can change the rapidly changing population in this arena. Notably, jails are the most populous mental health institutions. More and more individuals with severe and persistent mental health issues and those that are un-diagnosed are being housed in correctional facilities and cared for in community-based settings.

**Testimony from Formerly Incarcerated People**

**Mr. Omavi Shukur, Director, Seeds of Liberation, Inc.**, spoke briefly about the struggles and consequences of Arkansas' criminal justice policies and administration that former inmates encountered during their incarceration. He introduced an audio recording from an inmate who passed away last year of an incurable medical condition, and four former inmates shared their compelling testimonies. Senator Hutchinson thanked the individuals for sharing their testimonies and success stories with the task force and stated their comments had not fallen on deaf ears.

**Third Presentation: Justice Reinvestment in Arkansas [Handout 2]**

**Mr. Andy Barbee, Research Manager, The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center**, presented a third report on *Justice Reinvestment in Arkansas* (see Handout 2 for full report). He gave a brief review of the issues that were discussed at the previous meeting. Mr. Barbee reminded the task force to consider the three questions that were introduced in the first report regarding sentencing options, prison sentence ranges, and the process for reviewing sentences.

**Discussion/Update by Co-Chairs**

Due to time constraints, Senator Hutchinson stated that the task force will need to begin developing policies to incorporate into a report for recommendations. After a brief discussion, and without objection, the task force approved the following motions:

1. **Recommend a statutory change to the sentencing laws that would permit appellate review of a person's sentence that results from a bench trial or bench sentencing.**
2. **Review possible changes to the Arkansas Sentencing Grid.**

Senator Hutchinson announced that staff will check the calendar for availability to determine a date for the next task force meeting. Task Force members will receive a meeting notice via email after the date is confirmed.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.