

INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2017-091

REQUESTING THAT THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY STUDY THE CASELOADS OF PAROLE OFFICERS, THE STAFFING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY CORRECTION, THE ELECTRONIC MONITORING POLICIES OF THE STATE, THE RELOCATION OF PAROLEES IN THE STATE, AND CERTAIN POTENTIAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.

WHEREAS, public safety should be the top priority for the state; and

WHEREAS, the state's goal should be to be the safest state in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the Council of State Governments informed the General Assembly last year that average caseloads for Arkansas parole officers numbered over one hundred twenty (120) cases per parole officer while the average caseload in North Carolina was sixty (60) cases per parole officer; and

WHEREAS, the report by the Council of State Governments noted that it is particularly important to "focus attention and resources on people who are in the early stages of their supervision term" because those are the people who most need the parole officers' time and resources; and

WHEREAS, the report by the Council of State Governments also noted that high caseloads for parole officers "significantly impede their ability to facilitate behavior change among people on probation or parole"; and

WHEREAS, the budget request by the Department of Community Correction for new parole officers included approximately ninety (90) new positions, but no new positions were created; and

WHEREAS, adding new positions for parole officers would allow for a reduction in the average caseload of the state's parole officers, which would allow the parole officers to focus more of their time and resources on those former inmates recently released from prison to help give them, as they re-enter society, the best chance of success; and

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WHEREAS, violent crime in our capital city has been on the rise,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT PROPOSED BY THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY OF THE NINETY-FIRST
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the Senate Committee on Judiciary study:

(1) Average caseloads for parole officers in the state;

(2) Whether additional positions for parole officers should be
created immediately;

(3) Whether additional parole officers should be assigned to
certain areas of the state;

(4) The number of job openings in the Department of Community
Correction;

(5) The turnover rates at the Department of Community
Correction;

(6) The electronic monitoring policies of the state, as well as
potential policy enhancements, costs, and effectiveness of expanding
electronic monitoring to include all parolees convicted of an offense
involving violence or home invasion;

(7) Where parolees relocate in the state and whether certain
areas of the state have a higher number of parolees than other areas; and

(8) Potential policy recommendations concerning:

(A) Methods of providing former inmates with the best
chance of a safe and successful re-entry into society; and

(B) Means of reducing recidivism and the overall crime
rate.

BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT the House Committee on Judiciary be invited
to participate in the study.

Respectfully submitted,

1 Senator Will Bond
2 District 32
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5 Senator David J. Sanders
6 District 15
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9 Senator Joyce Elliott
10 District 31
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13 Representative Clarke Tucker
14 District 35
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17 Representative Warwick Sabin
18 District 33
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21 Representative Andy Davis
22 District 31
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25 Representative Charles Blake
26 District 36
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29 BPG/BPG
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