

Governor Carney Announces Plan to Address Recommendations of DOC Independent Review

Plan includes appointment of Special Assistant to lead turnaround, and \$2 million investment in cameras at JTVCC

DOVER, Del. – Governor John Carney on Tuesday released his [plan to act](#) on the recommendations of the [initial report](#) of the Independent Review into the causes of the February 1 incident at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center.

“We should all take this Independent Review seriously,” said **Governor Carney**. “It’s time to focus on addressing the difficult problems facing our prisons. We cannot let this report collect dust on a shelf. Our plan would take appropriate action to address the review team’s recommendations, and to help enhance safety and security for correctional officers and inmates at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center and across Delaware’s correctional system.”

The Governor’s Plan will:

- Appoint a temporary **Special Assistant** at the Department of Correction to spearhead reform of management practices, training and cultural turnaround. The position will report to the DOC Commissioner, but produce public reports at six months and a year, with a focus on implementation of the Independent Review’s recommendations.
- Direct the Delaware State Police and DOC to meet and jointly conduct an **after-action review** of the February 1 incident to identify any appropriate improvement to

- incident management protocols and policy.
- Allocate **\$2 million to purchase new cameras** at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center. Funding for the cameras will require approval by the General Assembly.
 - Direct the Delaware Department of Technology & Information to prepare a **strategic technology plan** for the Department of Correction, and to assume operational responsibility for technology needs across Delaware's correctional system.
 - Continue Collective Bargaining with the Correctional Officers Association of Delaware (COAD) – which began in April – with the goal of **increasing base pay** for Delaware's correctional officers and **decreasing use of mandatory overtime**.
 - Direct to-be-created Department of Human Resources to prepare and implement a staffing plan to **eliminate the current shortage** of correctional officers. The Department will report on progress every three months until the shortage is eliminated.
 - Recruit a new **Bureau Chief of Community Correction** with expertise in managing re-entry programs, and reducing recidivism. The new Bureau Chief will work with the Criminal Justice Council to deliver recommendations for improving re-entry programs, and reducing recidivism, to Governor Carney by November 2017.

Governor Carney's budget proposal also includes investments related to the Independent Review team's recommendations. His financial plan would increase annual hazardous duty pay for Delaware's correctional officers, authorize new positions at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center, and invest in new equipment that will help correctional officers respond to and prevent violent incidents.

"We are committed to addressing the issues facing our correctional system," said **Perry Phelps, Commissioner of the Delaware Department of Correction**. "This plan will help us

address the safety and security of our facilities, more effectively recruit and retain correctional officers, and invest in new equipment and technology that will help us operate more safely and efficiently.”

“We know the challenges we face in our prisons and now we have a blueprint for solving them,” said **Senator Bruce Ennis, chair of the Senate Corrections & Public Safety Committee**. “Now it’s up to the General Assembly to show the political courage to get this done for the brave men and women who put so much on the line to keep our prisons safe and orderly.”

“We need to address these longstanding issues at Delaware’s correctional facilities to better help our dedicated correctional officers and provide them with sustainable quality of life changes. The governor’s plan is multi-faceted and I am optimistic it will help us get to the root cause of these systemic issues. I am also encouraged to see that there is a priority to recruit a Bureau Chief of Community Correction with an expertise in managing re-entry programs,” said **Representative James Johnson, chair of the House Corrections Committee**. “We need to ensure that history does not repeat itself and we are bolstering our correctional system so the facilities are safe, secure and have the interests of both the inmates and staff in mind.”

“I thank the Governor for ordering this independent review, as well as Commissioner Phelps for taking the necessary steps to lead the Department of Correction. We are taking steps to address these issues in great part thanks to the work of Correctional Officers Association of Delaware members for being responsible and never wavering in advocating for correctional officers,” said **Representative Larry Mitchell, vice-chair of the House Corrections Committee**. “As vice-chair of Corrections we are going to do what we can to implement the recommendations.”

“I see this initiative as a series of positive strides

forward, but this should only be the start of the journey,” said **State House Minority Leader Danny Short**. “State leaders need to commit to continue reviewing and improving the conditions in our prison system.”

“We have a duty to provide a secure environment inside the correctional system, both for the sake of our dedicated staff and for inmates they supervise,” said **State House Minority Whip Deborah Hudson**. “The actions announced by the governor constitute a down payment on satisfying that obligation.”

“For me, one of the most disturbing parts of the initial Independent Review were the observations made by the review team about the level of burnout among JTVCC staff, due in large part from the ‘excessive overtime that is being worked.’ I support the Governor’s plan of action and I am especially happy to see the priority that is being placed on the need to increase correctional officers’ base pay, provide additional training, and reduce the use of mandatory overtime,” said **Representative Kevin Hensley**, who represents the area in which the JTVCC facility is located.

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