

LEGISLATIVE NEWS



Rep. Jack Considine Chair, House Corrections Division

On July 23, 2019, the GRC received an important letter from Representative Jack Considine, the new Chair of the House Corrections Division for the MN House of Representatives, that we are sharing with you. I encourage everyone serving time to read it. He speaks on some important matters that are relevant to everyone incarcerated.

House Corrections Chair Works on Solutions and Reforms to State Prison System

From: Rep. Jack Considine

This legislative session, I had the honor to serve as Chair of the House Corrections Division, a brand new committee to the Minnesota House tasked with improving safety, programming, and ultimately, the outcomes for people incarcerated in Minnesota's correctional facilities. We've had several organized tours and visits of the facilities, and in February – in an unprecedented step – held an official legislative hearing inside a state prison. Since January, I've also heard from many of you directly with a variety of concerns you've either witnessed or experienced.

Please know that while I take each of these seriously, I'm unable to respond to all of them individually. I will note this year, the Legislature approved my bill to reestablish the position of Ombudsperson for the Dept. of Corrections. Eliminated in 2003 due to budget cuts, this position will be responsible for investigating complaints within the D.O.C. and providing recommendations. I truly feel this will improve the safety and well-being of everyone within the walls of our jails and prisons, and am hopeful people will take advantage of the office's services.

Still, I recognize there is more to do. In many cases, programming opportunities remain inadequate, and treatment available within the system for substance abuse and mental illness doesn't meet the need. Our state's probation system is also long overdue for reform to ensure all Minnesotans are able to succeed in our communities.

For too long, the Legislature has treated state correctional facilities as out of sight and out of mind. This approach hasn't served anyone well, neither the residents who deserve to live safely and with dignity, nor the public as a whole, which deserves positive outcomes from taxpayer investments. All of us should share the goal that everyone – whether working or incarcerated within a facility – can come home safely. I'm fully committed toward this goal and will continue thoughtfully working to enact the policy solutions ensuring this can be a reality.

If you are interested in reaching out to Rep. Jack Considine, you can reach him at:

Rep. Jack Considine
Minnesota House of Representative
Chair, House Corrections Division
433 State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

Safety and Security Hearing

Many of you have inquired about the results of the legislative hearing on safety and security for MN prisons that was conducted here at Rush City on August 14, 2019. As of right now, we are waiting for that information, which could take awhile. When/if we hear back from them, we will gladly share that information with you. You should also be aware that it was a hearing that was conducted with just a handful of individuals that were pre-approved and pre-selected to attend. Unfortunately, the GRC editors were not among those approved to attend. Due to our absence we were not able to cover the issues that were addressed by those individuals. As to the hearing itself, the findings may or may not be disclosed to us. If we do receive them, we will certainly do our best to get the information out to you as soon as we can.

We thank you for your concerns and participation.