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## Agency News

# TDCJ budget request emphasizes maintaining current services

During their August meeting, the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approved the TDCJ Fiscal Years 2018-2019 Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR). Consistent with instructions provided by the governor and the Legislative Budget Board, the “base” appropriations request assumes a 4 percent budget reduction in the next biennium. According to TDCJ Chief Financial Officer Jerry McGinty, the agency’s highest priority for additional funding over the base request is the money necessary to maintain current operations.

In addition to the “exceptional item” which seeks to maintain the funding necessary to continue current programs and services, the LAR includes nine other exceptional items seeking additional appropriations. Although exceptional items related to currently scheduled per diem increases, renovation and repair of existing facilities, offender health care and CSCD health insurance seek funding above the base, most of the funds are necessary to maintain current operational levels.

The only requests for program expansion involve probation specialized caseloads, substance abuse treatment, mental health care and reentry. An information technology project to update aging legacy systems still in use is also included.

While acknowledging the funding constraints facing the Legislature, the LAR also asks policymakers to consider providing across-the-board pay raises for state employees.

Chief Financial Officer Jerry McGinty said the TDCJ Legislative Appropriations Request “reflected a commitment to fiscal restraint that is shared by policymakers, the Board of Criminal Justice and agency administration.” McGinty explained, “In regards to additional funding, only items of critical importance were included in the LAR. We also identified some areas where the level of current spending can be reduced, and therefore will not seek restoration of the entire 4 percent reduction. In addition, during the legislative session we will work with the Leg-



islature and governor’s office to identify additional savings.”

A copy of the TDCJ Legislative Appropriations Request, as well as a brief summary of the LAR, is available on the TDCJ website. See the Message from the Executive Director article in this issue of *Connections* for more information regarding the TDCJ Fiscal Years 2018-2019 Legislative Appropriations Request. ●