



An employee publication of the
Texas Department of Criminal Justice

September/October 2012
Volume 20 Issue 1

Agency News



TDCJ submits FY 2014-2015 Legislative Appropriations Request

As directed by the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) and the Governor's Office of Budget, Planning and Policy, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) submitted the fiscal representation of the agency's strategic plan, the FY 2014-2015 biennial TDCJ Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR), in August of this year. As requested by state leadership, the agency's "baseline" request for the 2014-15 biennium does not exceed 2012-13 general revenue-related funding levels.

The agency's LAR also seeks funding for "exceptional items" over and above baseline funding. These additional appropriations would address basic operational issues related to infrastructure needs and would continue the agency's emphasis on treatment, diversion and reentry. Examples of exceptional item funding sought in the FY 2014-2015 LAR include:

- Repair and Rehabilitation of Facilities: Continued funding is necessary to maintain more than 100 correctional facilities statewide, many of which are more than 75 years old and require substantial, ongoing preventive repair and renovation.
- Offender Health Care: Additional funding to maintain operations and ensure effective overall quality of care within the system as deemed critical by university health care providers is requested.
- Parole Caseload Growth: The number of active parolees under supervision is projected to increase above current levels. TDCJ seeks additional funds to maintain current caseload ratios.
- Community Corrections: Funding to help CSCDs meet the rising cost of state

employee health insurance and maintain existing community correction and diversion programs is requested.

- Fleet Vehicles, Computers and Laundry/Food Service Equipment: Funding to replace aging vehicles, computers, and laundry/food equipment is requested.
- Correctional Housing - Bachelor Officers' Quarters (BOQ) Dorms: Requested funding would provide for construction of seven 80-bed officers' quarters at units with substantial correctional officer vacancies.

The agency's LAR also encourages the legislature to provide a pay raise for all employees. In the event such a pay raise is not financially feasible, the agency suggested a targeted pay raise for uniformed security staff.

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All state agencies were also asked to produce a scenario which would reduce their 2014-15 base funding request by 10 percent. A 10 percent reduction in FY 2014-15 base funding for TDCJ, which would be in addition to the reductions made during FY 2011, would have an overwhelmingly negative impact on agency operations, to include a substantial reduction in force.

TDCJ Executive Director Brad Livingston said the LAR was prepared while taking into account both fiscal constraints and the agency's critical public safety priorities. He added that the state's financial situation looks brighter than it did two years ago, but emphasized the Legislature always has to deal with limited resources when appropriating limited funds among all state agencies.

"I think state government is definitely in a better situation today, but that doesn't mean legislators won't have to make difficult decisions regarding appropriations," said Livingston. "We approach this legislative session the same as we have every session; limit our funding requests to our highest priorities, and provide accurate information for use by elected officials in making their decisions."

A more extensive [summary](#) of the FY 2014-15 LAR is available for review, as is the [entire document](#).

The 83rd Texas Legislature will convene at noon on Tuesday, January 8, 2013. The regular session will end on Monday, May 27, 2013. ●