



TAXATION AND BUDGET REFORM COMMISSION

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Staff Analysis and Economic Impact Statement

Measure: SR 19

REFERENCE:

ACTION:

Sponsor: Commissioner Rouson

1. GSC

Favorable

2. PBPC

Favorable

Subject: Expansion of Faith & Character
Based Initiatives in Florida's
Corrections System to Reduce
Recidivism

3. TBRC

Pre-meeting

Date: February 22, 2008

I. Summary:

Statutory Recommendation 19 amends Section 944.803, F. S., to mandate the expansion of faith and character based programs at Lawtey Correctional Institution, Hillsborough Correctional Institution, and Wakulla Correctional Institution. The measure requires the Department of Corrections to evaluate faith and character-based prison programs for cost savings, crime reduction, and enhanced professionalism of employees. The measure encourages the Legislature to use any potential savings resulting from faith and character-based prison programs for ex-offender transition assistance.

II. Present Situation:

Faith and Character-Based Institutions (FCBIs) are correctional facilities dedicated to the FCBI Correctional Initiative. The Faith and Character-Based Correctional Initiative is an innovative effort by the Department of Correction to reduce recidivism and disciplinary infractions in correctional institutions by providing character-based programs for inmates committed to inner transformation. The initiative offers inmates a variety of activities and classes (both religious and secular) focused on personal growth and character development.

The Department of Corrections staffs three FCBIs, featuring public forums for volunteers who want to have a positive effect on inmates' lives and provide a range of activities and classes (both religious and secular) for qualified inmates. Eligible inmates can volunteer for FCBIs without regard to religion and can choose among secular or religious programming.

Currently, there are three Faith and Character-Based Institutions operating in the State of Florida. These programs offer 2,883 beds in the following facilities: Lawtey Correctional Institution (CI), Hillsborough CI, and Wakulla CI.

The Department of Corrections was supportive of the program's establishment. Prison administrators were interested in the program's promise for increasing prison safety and reducing recidivism, particularly at minimal cost. Prison officials saw the advantage of segregating a relatively low-risk, self-accountable population, thereby freeing up correctional officer time and labor to focus on higher-risk segments of the prison population.¹

Criteria for Eligibility

An inmate's faith, or lack thereof, is not considered in determining eligibility for an FCBI, but each of the following criteria must be satisfied:²

- Inmates must have received no disciplinary reports that resulted in disciplinary confinement during the previous ninety (90) days;
- Inmates must be in general population housing status (not in work-release, reception or transit status);
- Inmates must fit the parameters of the institutional profile; and
- Inmates must volunteer for the FCBI.

Courses/Programs Provided to Inmates

Courses listed below are examples of programs (courses of studies) that are provided by secular and religious organizations and individual volunteers. Programs which focus specifically on strengthening families are listed in italics.³

- Life Skills
- Personal Faith
- Family Relationship
- Victim Awareness
- Parenting
- Substance Abuse
- Financial Concepts
- Anger Management
- Interview & Job Skills
- Goal Setting

¹ Rediscovering Compassion: An Evaluation of Horizon Communities in Prison. Commissioned by: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Community Services, Administration for Children and Families, <http://horizoncommunities.org/images/Horizon3%20-compassion%20.pdf>

² Department of Corrections - Faith and Character Based Correctional Initiative, FCBI Institutions. - <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/oth/faith/ci.html>

³ Department of Corrections - Faith and Character Based Correctional Initiative, Introduction. - <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/oth/faith/index.html>

- Computer Literacy
- Small Business Concepts
- *Fatherhood Curriculum*
- *Parenting Classes*
- *Family Days*
- *Reading Family Ties*
- *Writing Family Ties*
- *Marriage Enrichment*
- *Women's Empowerment*

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The measure proposes to expand existing faith and character based programs at Lawtey Correctional Institution and Hillsborough Correctional Institution. Statutory Recommendation 19 mandates the faith and character-based program at Wakulla Correctional Institution to include the main unit, work camp, and annex. Statutory Recommendation 19 requires that the Department of Corrections evaluate the benefits, implications, and realistic limitations of the faith and character based prison model for cost savings, crime reduction, enhanced professionalism of correctional employees, and replicate the faith and character-based model when feasible.⁴

The objectives of a faith and character based institution include rehabilitation, reintegration of inmates into the community, reduction of recidivism, increasing system-wide institutional security, offering a broader range of religious accommodations, and enhancing restorative justice programming.

Statutory Recommendation 19 directs the Department of Corrections to expand and improve the FCBI corrections program, to the extent possible.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution states that:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.⁵

The Florida Department of Corrections' Procedure 506.032 has been researched to insure compliance with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and with Article I, Section III of Florida's Constitution. The Policy Statement from Procedure 506.032 provides that volunteers from both secular and religious organizations are equally welcome to participate, subject only to content neutral time, place and manner restrictions based on institutional, administrative and security needs. An inmate's religious faith, or lack

⁴ SR 19, Faith and Character Based Prisons. Sponsored by TBRC Commissioner Darryl Rouson.

⁵ United States Constitution, Bill of Rights – Amendment I

thereof, is not considered in determining eligibility for a faith and character based institution.⁶

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Faith and Character-Based Initiatives programs may make inmates better prepared to re-enter society as a citizen who can accept personal responsibilities and can create a positive impact through community service, employment, and other areas of responsible citizenship.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The savings resulting from Faith and Character-Based Initiatives effect of reducing recidivism will be redirected to programs to help transition ex-offenders into the community.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

⁶ Title 33 – Florida Administrative Code, 33-506 Specialized Institutional Programs