

Majority Report on Department of Corrections Early Release Scandal

I. Report

- More than 100,000 pages of documents reviewed.
- 27 witnesses interviewed.
- 13 witnesses testified under oath, in public session.
- Four hearings and two work sessions during the 2016 session.

II. Summary of conclusions

- Former Corrections Secretary Bernie Warner played a major role in the debacle.
- DOC executives failed to take responsibility for the necessary fix.
- DOC IT programs were mismanaged, a major contributing factor to the delay.
- The governor's office failed to provide proper oversight to a troubled agency.

III. Recommendations

1. Establish a corrections ombuds independent of DOC and the governor's office.
2. Investigate the Advance Corrections/STRONG-R initiative/project.
3. Mandate that the governor put systems in place to directly monitor critical agency performance.
4. Clarify through policy how personal relationships within the executive branch should be managed to avoid conflicts of interest.
5. Simplify Washington's sentencing code in a manner that does not reduce punishment or compromise public safety.
6. Review the staffing of the IT and Records departments at DOC.
7. Require a DOC-wide hand count in the event of any future computer error that results in early prisoner releases.
8. Require an annual report to the Legislature and plan to address DOC's IT maintenance backlog.
9. Enhance protections for DOC "whistleblowers."
10. Review whether additional actions may be possible against Warner.
11. Designate public safety as DOC's highest statutory duty.
12. Restructure information-technology governance at DOC.

IV. Major differences between Senate and governor's reports

- Governor's report did not conclude Warner's management was a factor.
- Governor's report did not clearly conclude STRONG-R was a factor.
- Governor's report focused on fixing blame on mid-level managers at DOC rather than examining responsibility of DOC executives or governor's office.
- Governor's report ignored personal relationships between DOC management and governor's staff and the way they may have impeded discovery of problems within the agency.
- Governor's report had fewer (though some overlapping) recommendations and no draft legislation.
- None of the witness statements or transcripts were attached as exhibits to the governor's report, offering no means for independent verification of facts and conclusions.