

# Why did the DOC investigation matter?

## 1. Public safety

Enhanced sentences are for specific actions that the public has judged make a criminal a greater danger to society—actions such as:

- a) using a deadly weapon
- b) using a firearm
- c) having a sexual motivation for a crime

Yet for three years, the early release of prisoners who had served enhanced sentences was not treated as an urgent public safety problem. **We need to be sure that DOC culture is one in which concern for public safety throughout the agency is paramount.**

## 2. Oversight responsibilities

As the resolution seeking subpoena powers made clear, the Legislature has a clear interest in learning the truth about the DOC early prisoner release scandal.

- a) We budget its resources.
- b) We pass laws of incarceration and justice for DOC to follow.
- c) We can confirm or refuse to confirm the DOC Secretary's appointment.
- d) The Senate is a co-equal, separate branch of government and offers a truly independent perspective from the executive branch.

Finding out the truth of what happens enables us to better conduct our constitutional duties and ensure that the laws of state of Washington will be carried out.

## 3. Victims deserve the truth

There was a human cost to this—people whose lives were lost and people who were swept up in the consequences of the early release of prisoners.

Bellevue mother of two, Lindsay Hill died. Her 13-year-old son found her body. Witnesses described her final minutes being spent getting beaten and trying to escape the car that would eventually be the instrument of her death allegedly at the hands of Robert Terrance Jackson, who was released from prison almost four months early.

Caesar Medina was only 17 when he was gunned down in North Spokane. His alleged killer is Jeremiah Smith who was released almost three months early. Caesar Medina was killed less than two weeks after Mr. Smith was let out of prison.

People have been assaulted. They have been victims of theft and burglary. They have been robbed, and methamphetamines were manufactured. Families have been abused by domestic violence. And these are just the crimes in which a conviction was obtained.

These victims and their families deserve the truth about what happened and why.

#### **4. Taxpayer losses**

Aside from the human costs incurred on individuals directly victimized by the early release of prisoners, we also face significant liability costs to the taxpayers. One \$5 million claim has already been filed, more are likely to follow. It's essential for the Senate to recognize these liabilities and their causes in order to diminish future exposure for the state.

In addition, the investigation uncovered evidence indicating DOC priorities included major contracts with an unreliable company with a history of failing to provide value for the taxpayer.

#### **5. True accountability**

Former DOC Secretary Bernie Warner is no longer in state employ and cannot be fired, but investigating the measure of his responsibility mattered. Knowing the full story of what happened and why enables us to better see where responsibility lies overall. It is unfair to hold lower levels of DOC staff responsible for the consequences of decisions made at the top.

True accountability must be appropriately measured. Without knowing the full story, one cannot assign the appropriate level of responsibility to staff at any level.