

Discussion Points

STATE PAROLE BOARD

1. The Governor's budget incorporates an estimated \$5.183 billion over two fiscal years in federal stimulus funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. According to a table on page 42 of the Governor's abbreviated budget, the State will use \$3.074 billion (\$854 million in FY 2009 and \$2.220 billion in FY 2010) from ARRA for budget relief. In addition to these funds which will offset revenue shortfalls, \$2.109 billion will be used for new or expanded programs or initiatives. The ARRA allocates funds to states both by formula and by competitive awards. Most executive departments anticipate stimulus funding in either FY 2009, FY 2010 or both.

- *Question:* Please itemize the federal stimulus funding, other than portions of the \$3.074 billion allocated for budget relief, included in the department's budget, by fiscal year and federal program, setting forth program goals and eligible uses together with the amount for state administrative expenses and the amount for allocation to local public and private recipients, respectively. Please identify intended and actual recipients and the process by which the Parole Board determines recipients and funding awards. Are there ARRA funds that flow through your department for which the State has no discretion? Please also set forth the timetable for obtaining federal approval of funding, obligation and allocation of funding to recipients, and use by recipients. Could any of this funding be used to offset other State appropriations, and if so, what programs and in what amount? What additional positions, if any, have been and will be hired with these funds? If this money is being used for new or expanded activities, will the new or expanded activities be continued in FY 2011? If so, how will they be funded?

- *Question:* In addition to funding incorporated in the FY 2010 budget, what specific competitive grant opportunities has the Parole Board identified that it is eligible to pursue, has applied for, and has been awarded, respectively?

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

The State Parole Board (SPB) is not a direct recipient of ARRA funds. The SPB is working to secure funding opportunities through the Federal stimulus plan with various departments.

Other federal grants include the following:

Greater Mercer Prisoner Reentry Initiative – Grant award received 8/29/08 from the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, in the amount of \$536,633.00. Funding shall be utilized to strengthen employment readiness and job sustainability for 200 offenders returning to the Another Chance Initiative City of Trenton as well as the surrounding Mercer County area. Level of Service Inventory–Revised and discharge plan will be reviewed to select appropriate candidates for PRI participation. Organizations receiving grant funding include the City of Trenton, Mayor’s Office of Employment and Training (providing employment specialists to connect offenders to employment and employment training opportunities) and Opportunities for All (providing Community Resource Center program services, employment retention and employment training services). Initiative will be evaluated by Dr. Bonita Veysey of the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice.

Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) Grant – Grant award received in February 2009 in the amount of \$20,979.77 from the Division of Criminal Justice under the auspices of the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners Grant Program. The New Jersey State Parole Board (NJSPB) will refer appropriate individuals to the Reentry Substance Abuse Program at Volunteers of America facilities. In addition to RESAP services at VOA, RSAT participants will receive additional screening, assessments and medical care as well as linkages to community health care upon entry into the program and as needed thereafter.

Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Grant – Notice of grant award received in March 2009 in the amount of \$33,600 to fund the positions of Counselor In Training and Vocational Specialist at the transitional housing program in Perth Amboy, New Jersey to build upon the successful initiation of these services during Year 2 of Byrne Grant funding. The Counselor In Training and Vocational Specialist positions will continue to be responsible for not only monitoring the progress of and providing employment-related assistance to the

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

offenders at the program, but will also assist the offender's supervising Parole Officer in connecting the offender to employment resources and social services providers. The State Parole Board (SPB) is also seeking additional Byrne funding.

Second Chance Act Prisoner Reentry Initiative Grant Funding – The NJSPB is currently collaborating with the Statewide Reentry Coordinator from the Office of the Attorney General concerning the development and submission of a grant application for FY 2009 Second Chance Act funds. Each Second Chance Act grant award provides up to \$750,000 in funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. The proposal submission deadline is April 20, 2009.

Offender Workforce Development Specialist (OWDS) Grant – The State Parole Board received a \$25,000 grant from the National Institute of Corrections. NJ was one of just three jurisdictions (along with Texas and Federal Bureau of Prisons) selected for this grant. The NJ SPB is New Jersey's lead agency in applying for and securing the grant, and in executing it on behalf of multiple agencies in our State. The grant enables the SPB to train its own employees, and those of other reentry agencies (State, Municipal and Community/Faith-Based) to become Offender Workforce Development Specialists, using federally certified methods to help ex-offenders find sustainable careers. Nationwide research shows that employment is vitally important to crime prevention and to the successful reentry of ex-offenders. SPB's efforts in securing this grant have enabled training for employees of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, New Jersey Department of Corrections, New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, the Judiciary, Federal Probation, and the community-based providers Kintock, Opportunities for All and Volunteers of America–Delaware Valley. We are planning further training sessions later in the year, funded by this grant, for other agencies.

2. Over the past several years, the overall staffing level in the executive branch has been reduced through restrictions on hiring and an early retirement program. The FY 2010 budget proposal envisions continuation of the hiring restrictions coupled with possible furloughs or further reductions in positions.

- **Question:** How has the reduction in staffing affected the State Parole Board? What strategies has the department employed to deal with staff

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

reductions? What projects, work products or functions has the Parole Board discontinued or deferred because of staffing levels? Will the Parole Board be able to accommodate furloughs in FY 2010 without increasing spending for overtime?

Several staffing changes have taken place at the State Parole Board. In FY 09, the SPB was one of a small number of State agencies to effectuate a layoff. Civilian bookkeepers were laid off as their positions were centralized, significantly improving quality control in the collection of parolee fines and restitution. Also in FY 09, the SPB began the process of reassigning Institutional Parole Officers back out into the field and reassigning civilian staff to the institutions instead. The reassignment of officers back out into the field allowed the SPB to avoid a January recruit class and achieve a budget savings. Parole Officer positions were added for the Parole Violator Assessment and Treatment Program and for the Sex Offender Management Unit. These actions resulted in a filled level of 698 in FY 09.

In FY 10 funded vacancies were eliminated as a reduction to the Parole Violator Assessment and Treatment Program as well as some attrition savings.

The State Parole Board is pursuing federal funding in conjunction with the Attorney General's office that if received will allow for the hiring of additional officers to maintain current caseload ratios.

The State Parole Board anticipates implementing furloughs without increasing overtime.

3. The FY 2009 appropriations act anticipated that \$25 million in procurement savings would be achieved by executive departments. A chart on page 75 of the Budget in Brief categorizes those savings and indicates they will continue into FY 2010. The FY 2010 budget includes another \$25 million from procurement savings (Budget in Brief, Appendix I, page 8).

- **Question:** Please indicate the FY 2009 amount of procurement savings achieved by the Parole Board, by the categories set forth in the referenced

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

table, and the sources of those savings by department program? What is the annual amount of these savings as continued into FY 2010? How have these reductions affected the Parole Board? What projects, work products or functions has the Parole Board discontinued or deferred in order to achieve these savings?

The Office of Management and Budget is providing the response to this question on behalf of all agencies statewide.

4. The Department of Corrections is responsible for providing for inmate mental health care needs which are currently provided by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Many such inmates are paroled with continuing need for mental health treatment.

- **Question:** What community resources are made available to newly released parolees with mental health needs? What actions does the State Parole Board take to monitor and assist those parolees who are mentally ill?

Since April 2006, the NJSPB has operated the Program for Returning Offenders with Mental Illness Safely and Effective (PROMISE). PROMISE provides comprehensive, intensive rehabilitation, treatment and support services to the segment of the seriously and persistently mentally ill population who are most challenged by their mental illness. The program will be specifically targeted to work with those parolees who meet this criterion and have either experienced repeated involuntary hospitalizations, have a history of criminal behavior related to their mental illness, are assessed as having a low level of functioning that would limit their ability to reintegrate independently in the community, or have previously refused to participate in rehabilitative services. The program goal is to assist parolees with mental health disorders obtain appropriate services in a complete continuum of care that includes, in many cases, permanent, stable, independent and affordable housing in the community.

PROMISE utilizes a multidisciplinary, mobile treatment team that addresses each parolee's basic needs including food, housing, health care, and mental health treatment. In addition to the residential programs located at Volunteers of

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

America facilities Fletcher House and Garrett House, PROMISE offers both transitional and supportive housing to qualified offenders requiring same.

In addition to referring parolees with mental illness to appropriate outpatient and residential community mental health treatment resources and providers, the NJSPB has established collaborative working relationships with the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health Services, to gain access to programs and services under their jurisdiction.

5. The New Jersey State Parole Board received an appropriation of \$3.952 million in FY 2009 for the new Parole Violator Assessment and Treatment Program. The program provides a structured alternative to re-incarceration for parole violators. Under the program the State Parole Board assesses each offender's specific risk factors and needs and refers the offenders to the appropriate rehabilitative "community programs" necessary to address those risks and needs. The FY 2010 budget reduces funding for this program by \$724,000 or 16.1 percent and provides funding for 135 bed spaces.

- **Question:** What is the status of the program? How many parolees have participated in the program to date? What impact has the program had on the recidivism rate of parolees and their success in integrating into society?

The Parole Violator Assessment and Treatment Program, also known as the Regional Assessment Centers (RAC) program has proven very successful. Through the month of February, a total of 810 technical parole violators have been diverted to alternative community programs rather than being sent back to county jail. This number includes 666 that have been placed in Re-Entry Substance Abuse programs and 144 that have been continued on Parole after evaluation at the Regional Assessment Center. The SPB was able to reassign existing officers, allowing the program to start in July rather than in October as originally planned. The reassignment of officers also created additional budgetary savings through the elimination of funded vacancies.

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

The reduced funding of \$724,000 in the Parole Violator Assessment and Treatment Program includes the elimination of 14 funded vacancies at a value of \$821,000 plus annualized growth of \$97,000, reflecting the net reduction of \$724,000.

The State Parole Board estimates county jail expenditures would be significantly higher than current levels were it not for this program.

The Parole Violator Assessment and Treatment Program enhances public safety and improves operational efficiencies as every day a parole violator spends in the program is one less day he is in county jail. Parole Board data indicates that RAC participants are revoked parole at 50% as compared to 80% for non-RAC participants.

Because this program is so new, there has not been a sufficient time frame in which to seek data on the recidivism rate of processed RAC participants. However, we are confident this initiative will have a positive impact. The RAC allows the State Parole Board to incorporate a clinically based decision making process which assists the hearing officer in making final recommendations.

Studies in New Jersey have shown that such interventions are associated with lower recidivism rates. The following are recent examples:

- In February 2009, the nationwide Journal of Offender Rehabilitation published the results of a study conducted by the NJSPB. The study found a 46 percent re-incarceration rate for non-supervised former offenders, compared with a 17 percent re-incarceration rate for parolees in a residential program.
- The Rutgers Center for Women and Work is currently studying the Female Offender Reentry Group Effort (FORGE) in Essex County. Their preliminary results indicate a 24 percent re-arrest rate for female parolees who participated in FORGE. A separate study previously found a 54.7 percent re-arrest rate for female ex-offenders in New Jersey.

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

6. The public outcry of New Jersey's citizens against paroled sex offenders living within their communities has greatly limited the areas where these offenders can reside after release.

- *Question:* What actions has the Parole Board taken to assist these offenders in finding housing? Would increased educational or employment opportunities improve reintegration into the community without compromising public safety? What additional resources would be required?

The SPB provides assistance to sex offenders who are unable to locate housing due to unemployment or residency restrictions. Sex offenders will require alternate housing in cases whereby minors reside in the proposed residence and subject is posing a risk to the residents. Alternate housing is located in areas that provide for male only residents to maximize public safety.

Although sex offenders as a group tend to be more educated and employable than other offenders, available housing may become an issue due to the nature of the sex offense. The State Parole Board continues to review housing resources as we need to locate suitable housing for offenders that are in close proximity to support networks, employment and counseling resources.

7. The Sex Offender Management Unit is responsible for the supervision of sex offenders, including parolees, sexually violent predators released from civil commitment and offenders sentenced to Community Supervision for Life. The Satellite Based Monitoring of Sex Offenders program provides for the continuous monitoring of convicted sex offenders while on parole in the community. Because many of the parolees admitted to these programs are required to be supervised for life, case loads will continue to increase annually.

- *Question:* What are the Parole Board's plans to deal with this ever increasing population of parolees? What is the rate of recidivism for sex offenses and other offenses, respectively, among this group of parolees? Does the board plan any revisions to its supervision methods in FY 2010? If so, please elaborate. What additional measures should be taken to assure

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

adequate supervision, but for which no resources are available? Please estimate additional funding requirements to implement these measures.

The increasing number of sex offenders supervised by the State Parole Board, as a result primarily of supervision for life sentences, does mandate frequent re-evaluation of sex offender management programming. However there are no plans to modify the adopted supervision approach utilizing the containment model of sex offender supervision. The SPB has adopted this evidence based practice approach to supervision that calls for the containment of the sex offender utilizing a collaborative approach with partners providing treatment for sex offenders, surveillance utilizing support networks and local law enforcement policies to share in the responsibility of monitoring sex offenders' behavior in the community and utilizing supervision tools as polygraph and GPS to identify, treat and ultimately reduce the level of risk that sex offenders pose. In the upcoming fiscal year, additional supervision tools, such as a risk assessment tool, will be honed and developed to provide parole officers with a better understanding of the risk that any one sex offender poses and to identify the areas that require additional treatment and supervision. Polygraphs will continue to be a widely used tool to assist parole officers in identifying risk and to make informed supervision decisions.

Recidivism rates of sex offenders vary depending on the type of sex offender. In general, those sex offenders who have committed a sex offense on a known victim have relatively low recidivism rates compared to those who have offended against a stranger victim. Rapists tend to have the highest recidivism rates and sex offenders who have offended against minor male victims have higher recidivism rates. Polygraph is an essential tool in determining the offense patterns of sex offenders as a predilection to a type of victim (minor males) can impact on their future risk level.

Additional resources to assist with the growing population of sex offenders under supervision is the key to effective sex offender supervision. No one tool takes the place of an officer making unannounced visits and having frequent contact with a sex offender. However, the SPB will continue to expand available resources for sex offenders by seeking to provide treatment slots in inpatient programs to treat

Discussion Points (Cont'd)

substance abuse issues that impact on risk level. This will require assistance from the community programs division.

The State Parole Board is mindful of current fiscal constraints and is supportive of what has been recommended in the FY 10 Budget.