Corrections

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This is not a comprehensive collection of all work on the state level. If there are resources you'd like to see featured here, please send them to us!

Committees

- Colorado House and Senate Judiciary Committees
- D.C. Council Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety
- Florida Senate Committee on Criminal Justice
- Kansas Interim and Standing Committees on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight
- Minnesota Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
- Texas House Committee on Corrections
- Vermont Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee

State Oversight Partners

- Arizona Department of Corrections, Office of the Inspector General
- California Office of the Inspector General
- Connecticut Office of Correction Ombudsman
- Indiana Department of Correction Ombudsman
- Iowa Office of Ombudsman
- Maryland Office of the Correctional Ombudsman

- Michigan Legislative Corrections Ombudsman
- Minnesota Office of the Ombuds for Corrections
- Nevada Department of Corrections, Office of the Inspector General
- New Mexico Corrections Department, Office of the Inspector General
- New Jersey Corrections Ombudsperson
- Virginia Office of the Inspector General, Ombudsman Unit
- Washington State Office of the Corrections Ombuds

Independent Oversight Partners

- Correctional Association of New York
- Illinois John Howard Association (citizen)
- Pennsylvania Prison Society

Interactive Resources

Audits, Agency Reports

- Alaska, Ombudsman: Department of Corrections, Health and Rehabilitations Services Ombudsman Complaints, Feb. 2024
- California, Office of the Inspector General of Independent Prison Oversight: Special Review: The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Implementation of Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act, Aug. 2023
- California, Office of the Inspector General of Independent Prison Oversight: Audit of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Controlled Substances Contraband Interdiction Efforts, Jan. 2023
- California, Office of the Inspector General of Independent Prison Oversight: The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Processing of Disabled Incarcerated Persons' Allegations of Staff Misconduct at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility, March 2022
- Louisiana, Legislative Auditor: Treatment and Care of Incarcerated Females, State and Local Correctional Facilities, May 2025

- Maine, Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability: Maine Commission on Indigent Legal Services (MCILS): An evaluation of MCILS's structure of oversight and the adequacy of its systems and procedures to administer payments and expenditures, Nov. 2020
- Massachusetts, Office of the State Auditor: Sex Offender Registry Board, Oct. 2023
- Nebraska, Office of Inspector General of Corrections: Use of 'Controlled Movement Units' Within NDCS Facilities, Oct. 2022
- Nebraska, Office of Inspector General of Corrections: Investigative Report: Fire at Lincoln Correctional Center Restrictive Housing Unit, Aug. 2022
- New Jersey, State Auditor: Department of Corrections, Mid-State Correctional Facility, May 2023
- New Jersey, State Auditor: Sexual Assault Examination Process July 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018; June 2019
- New York, Office of the Inspector General: Racial Disparities in the Administration of Discipline in New York State Prisons, Nov. 2022
- New York, Office of the Inspector General: Investigation of New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Incarcerated Individual Drug Testing Program, Jan. 2022
- Utah, Office of the Legislative Auditor General: A Performance Audit of the Oversight and Effectiveness of Adult Probation and Parole, Nov. 2022
- Utah, Office of the Legislative Auditor General: A Performance Audit of Healthcare in State Prisons, Dec. 2021
    - An In-Depth Follow-Up of Healthcare in State Prisons, April 2023
- Utah, Office of the Legislative Auditor General: A Performance Audit of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, Oct. 2020
- Utah, Office of the Legislative Auditor General: A Performance Audit of Information Sharing in the Criminal Justice System, Oct. 2020
- Vermont, Office of the State Auditor: Significant Deficiencies Demonstrate Need for Overhaul of the Prisoner Grievance Process, Dec. 2022
- Washington, The Office of the Washington State Auditor: Reforming Bail Practices in Washington, Feb. 2019

Committee Reports

- Montana House Select Committee Report on Correctional Capacity, 2025 Biennium
- Report of the J. Russell (Russ) Jennings Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight to the 2025 Kansas Legislature

Other Resources of Interest

- National Resource Center for Correctional Oversight
- Prison and Jail Innovation Lab at the University of Texas at Austin Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs
- State Oversight Academy's *Oversight Overview: Corrections Inspector General*
- State Oversight Matters: *Prison Operations Oversight: How Two States Find Facts on What Happens Inside Prison Walls*

In the News

- Low number of corrections officers in **Alabama** prisons cause for concern (Alabama Today, 2/24/2023)
  - The Permanent Joint Legislative Committee on Finances and Budgets-General Fund met in Montgomery to oversee the state general fund agencies, focusing on the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC), which faces challenges with a shortage of corrections officers. ADOC Commissioner John Hamm addressed budget committees, requesting an additional $122.4 million in funding for the 2024 fiscal year to address personnel needs. Despite concerns about staffing shortages, progress has been noted, and ADOC is constructing new mega prisons, but the Department is also facing controversy over the awarding of the prison healthcare contract to YesCare amidst legal issues and a Department of Justice lawsuit over prison conditions.

- **West Virginia** corrections staffing remains at crisis level (The Intelligencer, 4/17/2023)
  - The Legislative Oversight Committee on Regional Jail and Correctional Facility Authority met Sunday to hear testimony from officials at the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation, who reported an employee vacancy rate of 1,022. The state has a 32% vacancy rate for correctional officers, with some facilities experiencing rates as high as 70%. In August 2022, Gov. Jim Justice declared the vacancy issue a state of emergency and deployed National Guard members to

assist in prison facilities.

- **New Jersey**: Audit finds deficiencies at state prison specializing in addiction recovery (New Jersey Monitor, 5/30/2023)
  - A state audit revealed that the Mid-State Correctional Facility in Wrightstown, a prison offering drug addiction services, made several financial and operational errors. The facility paid vendors excessively, failed to provide necessary treatment to some recovering inmates, and mismanaged employee sick leave, potentially leading to schedule disruptions and increased overtime. Insufficient oversight and record-keeping deficiencies were identified as the main causes of these issues, raising concerns about the accuracy of spending comparisons and cost calculations.
    - Read the State Auditor's report

- **Louisiana** prisons need better oversight of sentencing changes, auditor says (Louisiana Illuminator, 9/11/2023)
  - The state legislative auditor released a report stating that the Department of Public Safety and Corrections should be more meticulous when making changes to sentences for good behavior and other credits. The auditor found that the department did not properly scrutinize sentence adjustments based on accomplishments and compliance with prison rules. This lack of review process increases the risk of errors in offender records not being identified and corrected in a timely manner, sometimes holding prisoners longer than it should.

- **Missouri**: State auditor looking at St. Louis jail, says condition 'warrant intense scrutiny' (EIN Press Wire, 9/26/2023)
  - State Auditor Scott Fitzpatrick is taking measures to ensure that serious complaints about conditions at St. Louis' jail are investigated, following a request from State Sen. Steve Roberts. Roberts initiated the request after receiving reports of "poor medical care, detainees going months without showers and other issues." Fitzpatrick expressed deep concern over the allegations and is gathering information to determine the next steps, while Roberts criticized city leadership for a lack of transparency and accountability in addressing the issues within the jail.

- **Missouri** auditor investigating St. Louis jail amid deaths and whistleblower reports (AP News, 10/13/2023)
    - The state auditor has initiated an investigation into the city jail in St. Louis, citing concerns about mismanagement, inadequate inmate nutrition and medical care, and interference with the civilian jail oversight board. The investigation was prompted by whistleblower complaints received by State Sen. Steve Roberts, alleging inmate abuse. Tensions have risen between St. Louis Mayor Tishaura O. Jones and community leaders, following three deaths in the jail within a six-week period, leading to calls for increased oversight and transparency.

- **West Virginia** Division of Corrections vacancies dip below 1,000 for first time since COVID (The Intelligencer, 10/17/2023)
    - West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation officials have stated that it's too early to determine the impact of funding aimed at recruiting and retaining correctional officers, but they have observed a decrease in vacancies. William Marshall, the commissioner, reported to the Legislative Oversight Committee on Regional Jail and Correctional Facility Authority that vacancies across the state's correctional facilities are now below 990, down from a peak of 1,100 during a state of emergency in August 2022. The state, grappling with overcrowding, has allocated funds and renewed agreements, but it is also facing a class action lawsuit over issues including funding levels, overcrowding, staffing, and prison conditions.

- **Arizona**'s Independent Prison Oversight Commission says it's 'not well positioned' for oversight (12 News, 1/2/2024)
    - Less than a year after Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs established the Independent Prison Oversight Commission (IPOC), a preliminary report reveals the commission considers itself "not well positioned" for oversight. The report, submitted on November 15, 2023, suggests that a volunteer commission is not the ideal framework for such oversight due to significant time requirements. The commission, formed in response to concerns about the Arizona Department of Corrections, recommends eliminating the expectation of oversight and transitioning into a Governor's Advisory Council to collaborate on prison system issues in the short term, while long-term oversight should be independent of the Governor's office.

- **Alaska**: Three deaths in custody underscores urgent need for legislative oversight of Department of Corrections (Alaska Native News, 1/18/2024)

- The Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) reported three deaths of individuals in custody within four days. The deaths raise concerns about the DOC's ability to ensure the well-being of those in its custody. The ACLU of Alaska, noting a record number of deaths in DOC custody in recent years, urges legislative oversight and accountability for the department's practices as the legislature's new session begins.

- **Colorado** lawmakers consider bill that would implement statewide jail standards (Denver7, 1/23/2023)
  - Colorado lawmakers are considering House Bill 24-1054, which aims to make state jails safer by implementing a basic set of standards recommended by the Legislative Oversight Committee for Colorado Jail Standards. The bill follows a troubling trend of in-custody deaths in Colorado. Supporters argue that the proposed standards, covering areas such as food service, visitor policies, and staff training, will create a safer environment for both inmates and jail staff, addressing concerns about mental health and suicide prevention.

- Officials says National Guard will be out of **West Virginia** jails soon (West Virginia Watch, 4/15/2024)
  - West Virginia officials announced to the Legislative Oversight Committee on Regional Jail and Correctional Facility Authority that the National Guard is being withdrawn from the state's jails, with only 80 members remaining, down from 413 in January. The state's Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation has significantly improved recruitment, hiring 291 correctional officers and 49 non-uniformed staff members since January. Faced with longstanding understaffing issues, the state has made legislative efforts to address them, including raising pay scales and offering bonuses to jail staff.

- **West Virginia**: National Guard no longer staffing state's jails and prisons, official says (West Virginia Watch, 5/21/2024)
  - The West Virginia National Guard has ceased staffing the state's jails and prisons, following a state of emergency over staffing shortages. This change comes after lawmakers approved legislation to address issues like understaffing and overcrowding by increasing pay and offering bonuses to correctional officers. With improvements in employee retention rates and ongoing efforts to address overcapacity, the state anticipates lifting the emergency status soon.

- **Wisconsin** lawmakers look into prison oversight (The 715 Newsroom, 6/7/2024)

- Wisconsin lawmakers are examining the state's prison oversight mechanisms following reports of mismanagement and abuse within the corrections system, considering establishing an independent oversight board to monitor prison conditions and operations, and seeking to address systemic issues that have led to a lack of accountability and transparency in the state's penal institutions.

- **Colorado** legislative committee to examine behavioral health in criminal justice system (Colorado Politics, 7/22/2024)
  - In the upcoming legislative session, Colorado will focus on improving mental health support within its criminal justice system, with a six-member oversight committee and a 31-member task force aiming to introduce five new bills in 2025. These bills will address various issues, including oversight of youth offender case management, pretrial deflection programs, extending hospital stays for mental health patients, and revising the not-guilty-by-reason-of-insanity plea. The committee has previously proposed significant funding for a crisis response system within the Behavioral Health Administration and is set to continue its work towards comprehensive reforms.

- Families describe assaults and deaths behind bars during hearing on **Alabama** prison conditions (News19, 7/25/2024)
  - Family members of inmates in Alabama prisons testified before the Joint Legislative Prison Committee, recounting incidents of violence, including stabbings and beatings, that resulted in deaths. They expressed frustration over the lack of protection for their loved ones and the systemic issues of understaffing, overcrowding, and rampant violence. The Alabama Department of Corrections has faced federal scrutiny and criticism for failing to improve conditions, with a researcher noting a high number of inmate deaths, including homicides, in the past year.

- **Louisiana** prisons need better oversight of sentencing changes, auditor says (Louisiana Illuminator, 9/11/2024)
  - Louisiana's prison system lacks sufficient oversight of sentence adjustments for inmates, particularly reductions based on good behavior and credits for program participation, according to a recent audit. The Louisiana Legislative Auditor highlighted issues such as inconsistencies in sentence calculations and improper application of sentence reductions. The report calls for

stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure accuracy and fairness in these processes.
    - Read the audit

- Short on fixes for prison problems, **Wisconsin** weighs proposals for independent oversight (PBS Wisconsin, 9/16/2024)
    - Wisconsin is considering proposals for an independent ombudsman to oversee prison conditions, prompted by concerns about overcrowding, understaffing, and abuses in the state's correctional facilities. Prison reform advocates argue that independent oversight could address grievances more effectively than the current Department of Corrections system. Legislators from both parties have expressed interest, but funding and staffing challenges remain obstacles to implementing the proposal.

- Audit examines **California**'s Sexually Violent Predator Conditional Release Program (KPBS, 10/16/2024)
    - An audit of California's Sexually Violent Predator Conditional Release Program, requested by the Senate minority leader, found rising costs, limited housing options, and community opposition. Participants in the program had a significantly lower reoffense rate (4%) compared to nonparticipants (19%). The report recommended state-owned transitional housing to address placement delays, though concerns over community resistance and rising costs persist. The audit also suggested that the Department of State Hospitals consider using multiple vendors for different program services.
        - Read the audit

- **Alabama**: Tense Prison Oversight Committee meeting filled with criticism over parole board's guidelines — 'You've, inadvertently, made the case that the board needs oversight' (1819 News, 10/23/2024)
    - During a recent meeting, Alabama's Joint Prison Oversight Committee expressed significant frustration with the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles' guidelines, questioning their transparency and effectiveness. Lawmakers, led by Rep. Chris England, scrutinized board chair Leigh Gwathney's responses regarding racial disparities, parole review criteria, and the board's decision-making autonomy. England argued that the lack of clear oversight and adherence to guidelines may warrant additional scrutiny, given the board's limited parole approvals and the

perceived need for greater accountability.

- **Texas** House panel subpoenas death row inmate Robert Roberson a second time (Texas Tribune, 12/17/2024)
  - A bipartisan Texas House committee has issued a new subpoena requiring death row inmate Robert Roberson to testify in person about his 2003 capital murder conviction, which some legislators believe was based on discredited “junk science.” The committee’s previous efforts were reportedly stalled by Attorney General Ken Paxton’s office, leading to this renewed attempt to hear Roberson’s testimony before the committee disbands next year. Roberson’s execution, initially scheduled for October 17, was delayed, and a new date has not been set. The Texas Supreme Court ruled that while a legislative subpoena cannot block an execution, it can be issued as long as it doesn’t interfere with a scheduled execution.

- **Texas** should close prisons and jails with staffing challenges, state oversight panel says (Texas Public Radio, 1/16/2025)
  - The Texas Sunset Advisory Commission, a state oversight panel, has recommended closing prisons and jails with severe staffing shortages to address operational inefficiencies and safety concerns. The panel’s report highlighted that understaffed facilities strain state resources and negatively impact staff and inmate safety. The recommendations will be considered by the Texas Legislature during its next session.

- **Missouri** lawmakers push for oversight panel to monitor conditions in state prisons (Missouri Independent, 1/21/2025)
  - Missouri lawmakers are proposing a bipartisan oversight panel to monitor conditions in state prisons, focusing on issues such as allegations of abuse and inadequate facilities. Supporters argue the panel would enhance transparency, promote accountability among prison officials, and prioritize the welfare of inmates. The proposal is linked to recent reports of systemic problems, including a record number of in-custody deaths, though debates continue regarding the panel’s authority and scope.

- **Louisiana** audit finds issues with treatment of incarcerated pregnant women (5/26/2025)
  - According to a report by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor, many local jails and correctional facilities in Louisiana are not complying with state laws regarding the treatment of incarcerated

women, particularly those who are pregnant. The audit found improper use of leg irons on pregnant and birthing women at three facilities, limited access to OB care, and widespread lack of documentation and written procedures meeting legal requirements. Additionally, 22 of 38 local jails surveyed reported that women do not consistently receive equal access to educational, vocational, and recreational programming compared to men.
    - Read the report

- **New York**: Lawmakers look to reform state commission on corrections, criticize group for failing to address prison problems (Watertown Daily Times, 5/28/2025)
    - At a joint hearing of New York's Senate and Assembly prison committees, lawmakers criticized the State Commission on Corrections (SCOC) for a lack of public engagement and oversight amid recent prison crises, including inmate deaths and a staff strike. Assemblymember Emily Gallagher and Senator Julia Salazar are sponsoring legislation to expand the SCOC from three governor-appointed members to nine, including legislative appointees with relevant experience and subject to review by the Correctional Association of New York. According to Gallagher, the goal is to revitalize the commission's role in oversight and accountability, with the bill pending a vote in the Assembly Corrections Committee.

- Oversight panel objects to new **Illinois** prison mail policy (Capitol News Illinois, 9/16/2025)
    - A bipartisan legislative oversight committee formally objected to an emergency rule by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that would allow prisons to withhold physical mail and instead provide scanned copies via tablets, citing concerns about transparency, process, and stakeholder input. Committee members questioned the urgency of the emergency rule. They criticized IDOC for prioritizing entertainment and communication features on tablets before implementing the mail-scanning function intended to address contraband issues. Although the emergency rule remains in effect through January, permanent rulemaking will require public input and is scheduled for further review at the committee's October 14 meeting.

- **West Virginia**: Corrections Commissioner Kelly provides update on retirements, inmate long-term care (The Journal, 10/7/2025)
    - During a briefing before the West Virginia Legislative Oversight Committee on Corrections and Public Safety, Corrections Commissioner David Kelly reported ongoing challenges from the retirement of experienced correctional officers, with nearly 100 retirements expected across

2024 and 2025. While recent pay and recruitment efforts have improved new officer retention rates, staffing remains difficult in facilities near state borders, prompting targeted legislative funding. Kelly also addressed long-term inmate care, stating there are no immediate plans to relocate inmates from Jackie Withrow Hospital amid the state's $140 million sale of long-term care facilities, but emphasized the need for future agreements with the new private operator.

- Bills aim to address 'inhumane' conditions in **Wisconsin** prisons and jails (News From The States, 11/11/2025)
  - Wisconsin lawmakers introduced a package of bills aimed at addressing reported inhumane conditions in state prisons and jails, following oversight hearings and public testimony on facility conditions. The legislation includes proposals for independent oversight, limits on solitary confinement, and enhanced health care standards. Supporters cited findings from past legislative audits and investigations highlighting deficiencies in correctional oversight and inmate treatment.

- **Nebraska** lawmaker was twice denied entry to McCook ICE jail, calling it a law violation (Nebraska Examiner, 12/8/2025)
  - According to the Nebraska Examiner, Nebraska State Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh was twice denied entry to the McCook ICE detention facility, a claim the senator says violates state law requiring elected officials access. The senator sought to inspect conditions following reports from attorneys and detainees, but was turned away by facility staff. The situation has raised concerns about transparency and legislative oversight of detention operations.

- **Nebraska:** Lawmakers invited to tour state-run ICE jail as group after Cavanaugh complaint (Nebraska Examiner, 12/11/2025)
  - Following a Nebraska state senator's complaint about being denied access to the McCook ICE detention facility, lawmakers have now been invited to tour the state-run jail as a group. According to the Nebraska Examiner, the Department of Correctional Services extended the invitation to address concerns about transparency and ensure compliance with laws permitting legislative access. The invitation comes amid ongoing scrutiny of the facility's oversight and the conditions of detainees.

- **Connecticut:** Lawmakers question DOC leaders after audit flagged shortcomings (CT Mirror, 1/16/2026)

- Connecticut lawmakers questioned Department of Correction leaders during a legislative oversight hearing following a state audit that identified multiple deficiencies in agency operations. The audit, reviewed by the Government Oversight and Judiciary Committees, cited issues with financial controls, staffing, and compliance with state policies. Legislators pressed for corrective actions and increased transparency to address the audit's findings.

- Oversight Committee hears testimony alleging mold, death, retaliation at **Michigan** women's prison (Michigan Public, 2/24/2026)
  - Testimony before a state oversight committee described conditions at a Michigan women's prison, including allegations that mold exposure contributed to a prisoner's death and that staff retaliated against those who raised concerns. Witnesses told the committee that complaints about unsafe living conditions were ignored or punished, according to statements made during the hearing. Lawmakers indicated the testimony would inform ongoing oversight and potential policy responses, as outlined in the committee proceedings.

- **Idaho** lawmakers order investigation of sexual assault in women's prisons (Investigate West, 3/17/2026)
  - Idaho lawmakers have ordered an investigation into allegations of sexual assault in the state's women's prisons, directing a legislative oversight committee to review conditions and agency responses. According to reporting, the inquiry will examine how correctional officials handled complaints, as well as policies, staffing, and protections for incarcerated individuals. Legislators indicated the investigation could lead to recommendations for reforms and increased accountability within the prison system.

- Bill to increase oversight of **Maine**'s jails headed to Gov. Mills' desk (4/6/2026)
  - A Maine bill aimed at increasing oversight of county jails is headed to Gov. Janet Mills after clearing the Legislature. According to supporters, the measure would expand the authority of the state corrections ombudsman to investigate complaints, inspect facilities, and review jail conditions. County officials raised concerns about potential costs and duplication of existing oversight, but lawmakers said the bill would improve accountability and transparency.

- **Michigan** legislators push prison oversight reforms amid safety concerns (The Center Square, 5/29/2026)

- Michigan lawmakers have introduced House Bills 5920 and 5921 to expand the Legislative Corrections Ombudsman's oversight authority by allowing corrections employees, family members, and prisoner advocates to file complaints, in addition to prisoners and legislators. According to the bill sponsors, the legislation responds to concerns about prison conditions, recent inmate deaths, and the need for greater transparency and accountability within the Michigan Department of Corrections. The bills would also provide the ombudsman access to medical and mortality records and require regular public reporting on complaints and their resolution.

- **CT** DOC ombudsman report questions prison use of force (NBC Connecticut, 6/5/2026)
  - According to a report from the Connecticut Correction Ombudsman, a use-of-force incident involving inmate Richard Benson at Carl Robinson Correctional Institution violated safety and policy standards, with investigators finding that officers used force and a chemical agent despite safer alternatives being available. The report stated that no contraband was found on Benson, although he received disciplinary penalties and a related criminal charge was not pursued. The Department of Corrections said it is reviewing the report and its protocols and plans to issue a formal response by the end of June.