# Oversight in the News

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- 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.

- Concerns grow about available engineering, contractor services for ARPA projects (Alabama Daily News, 10/6/2023)
  - Alabama plans to invest over $900 million in COVID-19 relief funds over the next three years for water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure projects. However, concerns are rising among state leaders about the availability of engineers and crews to complete these projects by the

federal deadline of 2026, as other states and communities are also utilizing their federal funding. Lawmakers are questioning whether the state has the necessary professional resources and supplies to meet the deadlines, and there are discussions about potential reallocation of funds if projects cannot be completed on time.

- 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.

- 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 to address the board's limited parole approvals and perceived need for more accountability.

- Alabama lawmakers propose changes to state contract review process (Alabama Political Reporter, 1/16/2026)
  - Alabama lawmakers have proposed changes to the state's contract review process to increase transparency and strengthen legislative oversight. The proposals, discussed by members of the Legislative Contract Review Committee, include shortening review periods and requiring more detailed justifications for emergency contracts. Lawmakers indicated these changes aim to enhance accountability in how state agencies manage public funds.

- Audit finds contract, funding documentation issues at Alabama education department (Alabama Daily News, 7/24/2026)
    - According to a state audit covering fiscal years 2020–2025, the Alabama State Department of Education needs to strengthen documentation and oversight of contracts and school funding decisions, including monitoring contract payments after auditors found nearly $874,000 in vendor payments exceeded authorized contract amounts and identified other procurement compliance issues. The audit also found weaknesses in documenting Foundation Program funding calculations and exceptions, which auditors said reduced transparency and increased the risk of funding errors, though they did not identify any school systems that were underfunded. State Superintendent Eric Mackey said the findings were primarily related to documentation and administrative processes, noting that the services were performed, no repayment was required, and the department plans to improve its recordkeeping and calculation documentation.
        - Read the audit