

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
CRIME AND CORRECTIONS HEARING

STATE CAPITOL  
HARRISBURG, PA

MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING  
ROOM 140, MAJORITY CAUCUS ROOM

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2013  
9:30 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON THE CLOSURE OF  
SCI CRESSON AND SCI GREENSBURG

BEFORE:

HONORABLE RON MARSICO, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE TIMOTHY KRIEGER,  
MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE BRYAN CUTLER  
HONORABLE SHERYL M. DELOZIER  
HONORABLE MARK K. KELLER  
HONORABLE BERNIE O'NEILL  
HONORABLE MIKE REGAN  
HONORABLE MARCY TOEPEL  
HONORABLE TARAH TOOHIL  
HONORABLE THOMAS R. CALTAGIRONE, DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE MATTHEW D. BRADFORD,  
DEMOCRATIC SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
HONORABLE BRYAN BARBIN  
HONORABLE VANESSA LOWERY BROWN  
HONORABLE DOM COSTA  
HONORABLE MADELEINE DEAN  
HONORABLE DEBERAH KULA  
HONORABLE BRANDON P. NEUMAN  
HONORABLE JOHN P. SABATINA, JR.

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*Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

## ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

HONORABLE GEORGE DUNBAR  
HONORABLE ELI EVANKOVICH  
HONORABLE GARY HALUSKA  
HONORABLE MIKE REESE  
HONORABLE RONALD G. WATERS

## ALSO PRESENT:

SENATOR KIM L. WARD

## COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

THOMAS W. DYMEK  
    MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
KAREN L. DALTON  
    MAJORITY SENIOR LEGAL COUNSEL  
MICHAEL A. FINK  
    MAJORITY RESEARCH ANALYST  
JODI A. MARSICO  
    MAJORITY RESEARCH SECRETARY  
MICHELLE R. MOORE  
    MAJORITY LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

ELIZABETH L. ORAZI  
    DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
DAVID VITALE  
    DEMOCRATIC LEGAL COUNSEL

I N D E X

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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MAJORITY CHAIRMAN MARSICO: Good morning,  
everyone.

I'm Representative Ron Marsico, Chair of the  
Committee. I welcome everyone here, and thank you for your  
time.

I'm going to have the Members of the Committee  
introduce themselves and other Members that may be here,  
starting to my right.

REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Good morning.

Representative Deb Kula from Fayette and  
Westmoreland Counties.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN CALTAGIRONE: Tom Caltagirone,  
Berks County.

REPRESENTATIVE TOEPEL: Marcy Toepel, Montgomery  
County.

REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Good morning.

Madeleine Dean, Montgomery County.

REPRESENTATIVE REGAN: Good morning.

Mike Regan, northern York and Cumberland County.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN MARSICO: The "late"  
Representative Mark Keller.

The "late" Representative Bryan Barbin.

REPRESENTATIVE HALUSKA: Representative

1 Gary Haluska from Cambria County.

2 REPRESENTATIVE REESE: Representative Mike Reese  
3 from Westmoreland and Fayette Counties.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN MARSICO: Once again, thanks  
5 for being here everyone.

6 Representative Krieger is the Sub Chair of  
7 Corrections, so I'm going to turn the hearing over to him.  
8 So I have an easy morning here, so this is good -- as soon  
9 as he turns his phone off.

10 Yeah; if you do have cell phones, please make  
11 sure that they're off. I'm going to do the same.

12 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Well,  
13 thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just let me take care of this  
14 technical difficulty here real quick. Unfortunately, my  
15 daughter knows how to use this better than I do.

16 But again, thank you, Chairman Marsico, very much  
17 for the opportunity to hold this hearing today. And  
18 Chairman Caltagirone as well, thank you, and thank you,  
19 Members.

20 I see Representative Dunbar just arrived as well,  
21 and I'd like to also acknowledge Senator Ward is in the  
22 audience observing as well. So I thank all of you for  
23 being here.

24 And, Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here.  
25 You know, we've had lots of questions, and I do appreciate

1 the fact that you're here. And I know you have some  
2 prepared testimony, and I know you can anticipate a few  
3 questions from us as well.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct.

5 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: But  
6 again, thank you.

7 A few opening comments. I think in government  
8 it's important that all things be done decently and in  
9 order, and on January 9, 2013, the Department of  
10 Corrections announced its decision to close SCI Greensburg  
11 and SCI Cresson. This decision was made without  
12 consultation with Members of the Legislature or with the  
13 prison employees. In a word, we were "blindsided."

14 In testimony before the Senate Judiciary  
15 Committee, the department acknowledged that the decision  
16 was handled poorly. That acknowledgment -- though welcome  
17 -- in my view, was several weeks too late. In going  
18 forward, I would certainly hope that the department handles  
19 any similar matters with greater openness, transparency,  
20 and respect. I believe the Legislature has an important  
21 oversight role to make sure the decisions regarding State  
22 facilities and millions of dollars in taxpayer moneys are  
23 made as part of an orderly process.

24 I do not question the need for the consolidation  
25 of prisons should reductions in State prison population so

1 dictate, nor have I advocated that any prison remain open  
2 regardless of cost. Spending reductions in this  
3 environment are no doubt necessary, and no area of the  
4 State budget should be immune from scrutiny. I do have  
5 questions, however, regarding the integrity of the process  
6 by which this decision was made.

7 In its oversight role, Members of this  
8 Subcommittee have an obligation to examine how and why that  
9 decision was made. To exercise effective oversight, we  
10 need hard data regarding costs and regarding how those  
11 costs are calculated, projected savings, and costs of  
12 renovations of older facilities versus costs of  
13 constructing new facilities, et cetera.

14 I am particularly interested in understanding  
15 when the decision was made and upon what the basis was of  
16 that information: Was a formal study prepared as part of  
17 that decision, and if so, did the study compare the  
18 operations of SCI Greensburg/SCI Cresson with other prisons  
19 in the State system? If a formal study was not conducted,  
20 upon what factual basis was the decision made?

21 And finally, I would like to hear something about  
22 what is intended with the buildings if indeed this decision  
23 is final. Does the department intend to put those up for  
24 sale? How does it intend to maintain those facilities?

25 And again, Mr. Secretary, I look forward to your

1 testimony and look forward to getting answers to these and  
2 other questions. Again, thank you.

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

4 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: I turn  
5 it over to you.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. Thank you.

7 I submitted last night or yesterday afternoon the  
8 testimony, so I won't read it verbatim unless you want me  
9 to.

10 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: It's up  
11 to you.

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. But what it basically  
13 lays out -- and we can quickly get to questions -- it  
14 basically lays out that when SB 100 was passed in July or  
15 late June, the fiscal note attached to that projected a  
16 reduction in population. At least the Senate fiscal note  
17 was specific. It projected a reduction in population of  
18 about 870 inmates plus others that couldn't be quantified.  
19 So I really think that was really the first die that was  
20 cast.

21 I think the anticipation -- well, I know the  
22 anticipation of the General Assembly was that this bill was  
23 passed specifically to reduce, first, population; second,  
24 spending and corrections. From that period of time, our  
25 population has consistently been reduced at the projected



1 rate. Shortly after there, there's a committee that's  
2 chaired by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and  
3 Delinquency that does population projections. Since this  
4 committee has been put together, the Department of  
5 Corrections budget is based on the population projections.

6 So, for instance, last year the population, or  
7 2 years ago the population was projected to increase. Our  
8 budget was based on that, on a per diem rate per inmate.  
9 That's how the budget is calculated. So this time the  
10 population projections, which is in the first tab, I  
11 believe, of the documents, of the packet that has the data  
12 in it, the population projections are that the population  
13 will decrease this year and continue to decrease over the  
14 foreseeable future.

15 So the population projection reduction, coupled  
16 with seeing an actual reduction, led to, this fall, us  
17 starting to consider Benner, SCI Benner, which is a new  
18 facility that was under construction when we took over,  
19 which at that point was considered an expansion, it made it  
20 a real possibility for that to be a replacement.

21 The second tab of your packet has the data, much  
22 of the data that you're talking about -- the costs per  
23 diem, looking at the different functions at the different  
24 prisons, looking at all the things you asked about. All  
25 that data is on here. So we began internal discussions at

1 that point of looking at, assuming that it's a replacement,  
2 what makes sense to replace, which facilities make sense to  
3 be the replacement.

4           And obviously the first number you look at is the  
5 per diem, because per diem basically takes the budget and  
6 divides it by the number of inmates. And also included in  
7 this packet that wasn't included in the Senate packet,  
8 based on some questions in the Senate, is a 5-year per diem  
9 breakdown, because there were some questions about a  
10 population reduction and the impact that that population  
11 reduction had on the per diem. Because obviously if you  
12 divide the overall budget by the number of inmates, less  
13 inmates would make that per diem higher. So we looked not  
14 just at a 1-year number but consistently the higher  
15 numbers, and that's really what put SCI Greensburg as one  
16 of the facilities to close.

17           And we really targeted the facilities that cost  
18 over \$100 a day. That was really, when you look at all our  
19 per diems, the obvious break line is \$100 a day. So in  
20 focusing on those that are \$100 a day, we put in the data  
21 under Tab 2 all the facilities that are over \$100 a day and  
22 then two of our newer prototypical facilities just as a  
23 point of comparison. They weren't part of the "are we  
24 going to close these," but just to give you a point of  
25 comparison, new facilities versus older facilities.

1           And in the second place, there was a series of  
2 facilities that were all roughly within the same over \$100,  
3 less than \$106 a day. And then we started looking for  
4 those facilities, specifically at functions, and also  
5 looking, in the case of SCI Cresson, its proximity to  
6 SCI Benner played a role in that. It was the closest older  
7 facility to SCI Benner.

8           So in one of these discussions we did some  
9 projections, cost projections. Some spreadsheets were  
10 completed, which I'm not sure are included in this packet  
11 but we can certainly get to the Committee, and looking at,  
12 the number is somewhere in the 2,400 inmate range. SCI  
13 Benner is about 2,000. We have 300 beds at Pine Grove and  
14 150 beds at Mahanoy that were empty. So that was really  
15 the ballpark. So then the math becomes, how can you get as  
16 close to 2,400 inmates with the biggest savings and replace  
17 the functions that are at those facilities, and the math  
18 led to these two facilities.

19           As far as the notification for employees, as I  
20 said before -- I'm not making excuses -- that was done  
21 poorly. But as far as the timeline, the timeline was  
22 dictated by the circumstances. In this case, the  
23 circumstances were a new facility going to be completed  
24 early fall -- or I'm sorry; late winter/early spring;  
25 population going down; becomes a replacement. That's the

1 timeline. And the other key factor is the budget. So  
2 those are the things that went into the decision.

3 And then also, once we made the announcement,  
4 then the focus became on, and you talked about -- perhaps  
5 you didn't talk about it -- the economic impact and getting  
6 rid of the facilities and those kinds of things. Then the  
7 posture was in looking at all the facilities, all the  
8 facilities over \$100. One of the things that became very  
9 obvious is that anytime you take a \$50 to \$60 million  
10 enterprise out of a community, it has a negative impact.  
11 There's no avoiding that. But by the same token, it has  
12 that impact whatever area you take it from.

13 So then the response from our standpoint as an  
14 administration is, let's put together a team so we can work  
15 with the local officials and try to identify, try to find a  
16 way to mitigate that local impact. But again I'll step  
17 back and say that if the goal of SB 100, which it clearly  
18 was, was to reduce spending in corrections and reduce  
19 population, this was a logical consequence of that. And  
20 again, the circumstances dictated the timeline.

21 So I'd be happy to answer questions. That  
22 basically sums up what the testimony was.

23 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Well,  
24 thank you.

25 And I know there are quite a few Members that

1 have questions, and if I could just begin with a couple.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Can I, one second?

3 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Please.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: I forgot to introduce -- I'm  
5 Secretary Wetzel. This is Deputy Secretary Tim Ringle,  
6 Deputy Secretary of Administration and our budget person,  
7 and this is Shirley Moore Smeal, the Executive Deputy  
8 Secretary. I apologize for that.

9 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: And  
10 again -- thank you, Mr. Secretary -- and again, I don't  
11 think anyone disputes the intended impact of the Justice  
12 Reinvestment Initiative. I think the question we have,  
13 certainly I have had is, again, coming to the conclusion  
14 that we have projected a drop in prisoners and are going to  
15 need to make some adjustments is the first step. The  
16 second step is how, where, and why we make those  
17 adjustments. I think that's where this Committee is  
18 exercising its oversight role, to understand how that  
19 decision was made and when and how.

20 And if I could just begin this off, I would ask  
21 you to take a look at the information in your packet; I  
22 think it's under Tab 3. You provided it to the Senate as  
23 well. It's Tab 3, "Data Decision Based On," and it was  
24 that chart you provided, and I know you provided it again  
25 today.

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: Tab 2.

2 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Yeah.

3 Are you familiar with it? I have a question. Could you  
4 walk me through that a little bit.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay.

6 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER:

7 Greensburg; I'm taking a look at Greensburg.

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: This is it?

9 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: That's  
10 correct; that's correct.

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay.

12 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: And I  
13 think you provided similar data to the Senate---

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

15 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: ---and  
16 it was on your Website as well.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct.

18 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Could  
19 you walk---

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: And Deputy Ringler may hop in  
21 here with a couple of things, because he's the one who  
22 prepared this.

23 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.

24 Could you, either of you, just walk me briefly  
25 through how the calculation of per diem was made; for

1 instance, in the Greensburg prison.

2 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: All of our per diem  
3 costs have been pretty much handled the same way over the  
4 last 25 to 30 years, how we calculate per diem, and I've  
5 been with the department that long because I've been  
6 working with those numbers for that period of time.

7 What we do is, we take our total costs at that  
8 facility, total operational costs -- no capital costs that  
9 come in from a different fund that's paid not by the  
10 Department of Corrections.

11 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.

12 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: We take that overall  
13 cost. We subtract any, like if we had any augmentations to  
14 capital budgets or anything that would be unique that  
15 really shouldn't qualify in that, but we really haven't had  
16 any in the last couple years. But we would subtract that  
17 out to get to total dollars that we use.

18 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Right.

19 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: And then what we do is  
20 we take the average inmate population over the course of  
21 that fiscal year. It's not a point in time, we take all  
22 the days and divide it by the 365, and that's the amount  
23 that we come up with. So that's pretty much the  
24 calculation that we use.

25 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: All

1 right. So for the Greensburg example here, if I took the  
2 \$46 million figure and divided that by 365 and by the  
3 average number of prisoners, would I arrive at that  
4 approximate amount for the per diem number for Greensburg?

5 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: Yes.

6 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.

7 And I assume for each of the other prisons, it would be the  
8 same, the same calculation.

9 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: Yes.

10 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Now, it  
11 mentions capacity on this chart as well. Is that a maximum  
12 capacity? What does that mean?

13 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: The capacity is what  
14 we call our operational capacity.

15 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.

16 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: And that capacity is  
17 basically how many inmates we believe we can safely secure  
18 or handle at that point, that we have staffing for, that we  
19 have infrastructure, et cetera, to support the number of  
20 inmates in that facility.

21 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: And to capacity, there's a tab  
23 in there that looks at the different capacity definitions.

24 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: But just  
25 rather than have us look, is that pretty much the



1 description you provided, essentially to---

2           SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, to operate -- I think  
3 what the description Tim provided was what we call our  
4 fill-to capacity, which is a slightly higher number. The  
5 operational capacity is kind of the ideal or design  
6 capacity, and that's kind of a term used nationally in  
7 corrections.

8           And just to give you a point of reference, in the  
9 U.S. Supreme Court decision in California's overcrowding  
10 case, what California was compelled to do was to get to  
11 137 percent of their operational capacity. So that's an  
12 ideal number with an understanding that, you know, very few  
13 places are at the operational capacity. The fill-to is  
14 more of what we plan to, what we move to, and what we make  
15 decisions on.

16           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Is part  
17 of this building of the new prisons with the fact that we  
18 look like we're going to have less prisoners going forward?  
19 Is that your goal eventually, to get to the operational  
20 capacity?

21           SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. And I think the  
22 projection, which is under one of these tabs, has us  
23 getting there in about 2 years.

24           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.  
25 All right.

1           And I'm a numbers guy. I was playing with some  
2 of these numbers as I prepared for this hearing, and when I  
3 calculate, for example, Greene and I calculate it based  
4 upon the operational capacity, the per diem I calculate is  
5 about \$142 per day. If I calculate Frackville, it's about  
6 \$116 per day. Again, these are all based upon the  
7 operational capacity. If I calculate Retreat, it's about  
8 \$113 per day, and if I calculate Smithfield, it's about  
9 \$139 per day -- some of those substantially higher than  
10 both Cresson and Greensburg.

11           And given that now we understand within 2 years  
12 we're going to try to be at operational capacity,  
13 essentially in 2 years we're going to be operating prisons  
14 that are substantially a higher cost per day than the  
15 prisons that are being closed, and I just would like an  
16 explanation as to how that makes sense financially or  
17 otherwise.

18           SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, in some of those prisons  
19 -- Greene, for instance -- it's not a comparison. Greene  
20 is where we have death row. It also has our biggest RHU.  
21 So death row is probably \$46,000 a year per inmate versus  
22 the 35 elsewhere. So SCI Greene is not an accurate  
23 comparison.

24           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: I'll  
25 throw them out then.

1           What about Frackville or Retreat?

2           SECRETARY WETZEL: Frackville is, again, a higher  
3 level and also a newer facility. It's a 25-year-old  
4 facility that was built specifically to do this. So that's  
5 a higher level.

6           I think Retreat is a relevant comparison. But  
7 again, I think the fill-to capacity, in Retreat's case we  
8 have relatively new modulars, and the modulars, for the  
9 operational capacity we use the square footage per cell.  
10 Much of the expansion at Retreat has been modulars.  
11 They've had significant modular expansion, so I'm not sure  
12 -- I mean, Retreat is a legitimate question between the  
13 two. Looking over the past 5 years, Retreat is less  
14 expensive than Greensburg has been historically.

15           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: And is  
16 that because it's filled over capacity?

17           SECRETARY WETZEL: It's the fill-to capacity. I  
18 wouldn't say overcapacity; over the operation of capacity,  
19 the fill-to capacity.

20           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Over the  
21 operation of capacity.

22           SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

23           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER:  
24 Smithfield, for example; substantially higher.

25           SECRETARY WETZEL: Another level for a higher

1 security unit with different functions. I mean, Retreat  
2 and Greensburg are essentially -- that's comparing apples  
3 to apples. The other ones, the functions and the higher  
4 security level leads to higher staffing, so it's not a  
5 comparison. It's not an apples-to-apples comparison  
6 because the functions are different, and the functions  
7 drive the staffing and the staffing drives the costs.

8 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Then let  
9 me, and I know that others want to make some points and ask  
10 some questions. I guess I'll leave you with this: You say  
11 Retreat is a fair comparison---

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

13 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: ---based  
14 upon operational capacity.

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

16 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: It is a  
17 more expensive prison than certainly Greensburg, perhaps  
18 Cresson as well.

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Historically it hasn't, but  
20 based on operational capacity alone, based on the  
21 parameters you put out there, yes.

22 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.

23 All right; I'll open it up to questions from  
24 other Members.

25 Representative Barbin.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: Thank you, Mr. Secretary,  
2 for your testimony today. And, you know, it's not  
3 surprising that people are interested at this point in how  
4 you're preparing the numbers to make a decision as to which  
5 of the prisons are going to be closing.

6                   What I'd like to ask you, though, has to do with  
7 employment, and this does affect Cresson, which is in  
8 Cambria County, and the question was the timeline for  
9 Benner. You know, we had no discussion, there has been no  
10 discussion of which prison institutions would be closing,  
11 and this idea that Benner would provide similar services to  
12 what Greensburg and Cresson are providing, we understand  
13 that's, you know, your explanation now. But we've heard  
14 from some of the people that are at the facilities, both  
15 Greensburg and Cresson, and the big question is, because  
16 this was done without any input from the Legislature or  
17 from the unions that have contracts at these facilities,  
18 there is a worry that the amount of people that could  
19 transfer -- I mean, I think your testimony was Cresson was  
20 included not because it was substantially different in  
21 numbers the way you figured them out but it was closer to  
22 Benner.

23                   SECRETARY WETZEL: That was one of the factors.

24                   REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: Okay.

25                   SECRETARY WETZEL: I wouldn't say that was the

1 key factor, but it was one of the factors.

2 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: But from a perspective of  
3 "are we doing this the right way," we want to know -- or at  
4 least the people that are raising the questions from us --  
5 have the positions at Benner been filled which will require  
6 a person at Cresson or Greensburg to either retire or to  
7 take a position someplace across the State? How many  
8 positions at Benner have been filled with people that are  
9 either coming from Greensburg or from Cresson?

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, we're still in the  
11 process of placing people.

12 In my testimony you'll see the placement numbers,  
13 other than the PSCOA placement numbers. The first phase of  
14 PSCOA placement numbers were completed yesterday. I don't  
15 have that data yet, but I can certainly get it to you.

16 Prior to the closing, there were only a handful  
17 of positions filled at Benner. Our assumption was that  
18 many people from Cresson would want to go to Benner, but  
19 there are also some that live in different parts -- not  
20 everybody lives right where the prison is, so some would  
21 want to go to some of the other adjacent facilities.

22 So to specifically answer how many from those two  
23 facilities chose to go there, I don't have that information  
24 at this point. It's certainly information I can get to  
25 you.

1                   REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: But I think that's the  
2 main issue that we're getting from the union. People have  
3 mortgages. They have to continue to pay their mortgage.  
4 If they don't have a real option and they can't go to  
5 Benner, then they can't maintain their lifestyle. And I  
6 guess the other thing is that I think it's the least that  
7 we owe the people that are working at those facilities,  
8 because all this was done where you had more notice for the  
9 prisoners than you did for the employees.

10                   SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't know about the "more  
11 notice." I disagree with that.

12                   REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: Okay. That is what we  
13 received, okay? That is how it's characterized to the  
14 people that we represent. I have members from Johnstown,  
15 even though it's 35 miles away, that are working at that  
16 prison. So now they're being told that Benner is a  
17 possibility. We need to know that it really is a  
18 possibility, because it's a little difficult to move that  
19 person with their house to work at Graterford.

20                   SECRETARY WETZEL: And in the Johnstown area in  
21 particular, there is also Somerset -- Laurel Highlands --  
22 which is closer to many folks.

23                   What's that?

24                   EXECUTIVE DEPUTY SECRETARY SMEAL: Pine Grove.

25                   SECRETARY WETZEL: Pine Grove also in Indiana.

1           REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: So it isn't necessarily  
2 if it goes to Benner, but what possibilities are there that  
3 allow you to stay in your house? That's the important  
4 part.

5           SECRETARY WETZEL: We have, included in my  
6 testimony, we have specifics as far as who has accepted  
7 positions and those kinds of things, and most of what we  
8 did is we surveyed the staff and they made choices of their  
9 top three.

10           Now, clearly, and again, clearly they are going  
11 to be inconvenienced, so I can't say that people who are  
12 living right next to the prison are in a better situation.  
13 I can't say that and I'm not trying to say that and I don't  
14 want to be misread that way, but we really tried to make an  
15 effort to get people as close to home as we possibly could.  
16 That was a factor in our placements.

17           To accomplish that, we looked at -- our overtime  
18 numbers are high, in the \$50 million range. So we looked  
19 at the facilities within the 60-mile radius of the two  
20 closing facilities, and we looked at that as an opportunity  
21 to pilot increasing the amount of specifically correctional  
22 officer positions to reduce that overtime. So we're  
23 piloting that and testing that, so we increased the amount  
24 of positions available.

25           And we should have specific placement numbers---



1           DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: We should have  
2 specific numbers very shortly. But from my understanding  
3 of the nonspecific numbers, the process went fairly well  
4 the last 2 days, and there are a lot of positions at  
5 Benner, frankly, that weren't taken.

6           And we went through all the lists, so most of the  
7 people, the overwhelming number, will be getting  
8 assignments for what they selected. Not necessarily their  
9 first choice, because the closer the facility, you know,  
10 the more people want to go to that, but within the  
11 institution that the individual selected as one of their  
12 choices.

13          SECRETARY WETZEL: And we can also, we can  
14 provide, after the placements are done, we can provide a  
15 list of where the placements were. And we can also  
16 cross-tab where the individuals live on that, so you can  
17 have that specific data.

18          We also agreed, and if I'm incorrect, correct me,  
19 but we also agreed that staff has a 3-year window to return  
20 to their first choice if they don't get their first choice  
21 at first.

22          REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: Yeah, and I guess that's  
23 what people worry about here on the panel, is that no  
24 matter how you filled out a flyer, there really shouldn't  
25 be anybody hired at Benner before all the people that are

1 at Greensburg and Cresson have been satisfied.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, and we agree with that,  
3 but there are a handful of positions that were required at  
4 Benner to go through the process of accepting the building  
5 from a Commonwealth standpoint and get trained on the  
6 security systems and those kinds of things. So some of  
7 those were unavoidable. But again, we can provide you that  
8 data, and the 3-year return window, I think, is key, and  
9 that's for -- each one?

10 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: We basically offered  
11 that to all the staff.

12 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: Thank you.

13 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: We've  
14 been joined also by Representatives Bradford, Neuman,  
15 Cutler, Mark Keller, O'Neill, and Delozier.

16 Representative Kula.

17 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Thank you, Representative  
18 Krieger.

19 Good morning, Mr. Wetzel.

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good morning.

21 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Good to see you.

22 I won't go through what we can all say was a  
23 debacle as far as the announcement. As a Representative of  
24 Westmoreland County, I received a phone call 1 hour before  
25 the Governor's press release, his news conference that day.

1 I heard it on the news the night before. So it was not a  
2 surprise; it was just a surprise that 1 hour before  
3 something like this affecting an area that I represent, I'm  
4 just finding out an hour before it happens. And I  
5 understand you've been through all of that and you've  
6 admitted.

7 But I said I've been on Judiciary since I came  
8 into this House 6 years ago. We have always tried to be  
9 very open and, as we've tried to do things, have always  
10 brought the Department of Corrections, whomever, in to see  
11 what we can do to make your job a little easier. I just  
12 find it very difficult to understand, and I believe I read  
13 somewhere, and you can tell me if I'm wrong, that some of  
14 this discussion started back in June of last year as far as  
15 the decreases in prison populations and maybe seeing that.  
16 And I guess if we start from the beginning, was this your  
17 going to the Administration and saying, you know what, we  
18 can close prisons because population is decreasing, or is  
19 it the Administration coming to you and saying, we need to  
20 save some money here; let's take a look at closing some  
21 prisons?

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't think either of those  
23 accurately describe the circumstances. I think that, first  
24 of all, last year this time, no one, myself included, would  
25 have, first of all, predicted that the legislation would go

1 through in the manner it did and it would be as  
2 comprehensive as it was.

3           Certainly we've tried corrections reform in this  
4 State myriad of times, and never has it had an impact. And  
5 even the projections from those have not had the  
6 projections that this package had. So for anybody to say  
7 that in June, before legislation passed, anybody thought  
8 that SCI Benner was going to be a replacement, it's just  
9 absolutely inaccurate and there's no way anybody would have  
10 guessed that.

11           And when you look at the press around -- we  
12 assumed that we would be able to, and our focus in this  
13 year's budget, in the '12-13 budget, was to close housing  
14 units, not to close prisons, and we were very specific.

15           Listen, you know how last year's budget process  
16 went. If we thought that we could have closed a prison and  
17 that would have been reasonable, it would have been in the  
18 budget. I mean, this is no -- we were hopeful that we  
19 could get to this place. We didn't really believe, until  
20 the legislation passed, and then even after that, until we  
21 saw 6 months of a reduction where we were really sure we'd  
22 get to this place.

23           So I think that as the legislation passed, the  
24 population started going down, and then we started -- I  
25 mean, we start our budget process in August, and our first

1 look at the budget, and last year's budget when we were  
2 asked questions during the budget hearings, if you want to  
3 look back on when we projected to open SCI Benner, it was  
4 in September of '13, because from a budget standpoint,  
5 given that extra quarter a year. So only when legislation  
6 passed and the population started going down did it become  
7 feasible that this was a replacement.

8           And then part of the question is replace one or  
9 two? And frankly, with the population projections, if we  
10 -- and listen, nobody wants a bunch of people to be  
11 unemployed, and certainly this is the state of corrections  
12 in America. If you look, everybody's closing prisons.  
13 Some places are closing prisons and laying off people.  
14 Illinois, 400 people laid off; a 20-percent reduction in  
15 staff in the State of Washington through these closings.

16           So we certainly could have just closed one, but  
17 given the projections, we would have been at a place where  
18 we closed the second one and there would not be -- we would  
19 not be confident in saying we will be able to offer  
20 everybody a job given those circumstances. So this is the  
21 right choice.

22           REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Well, I guess I mean, I  
23 think if you look at the crime rate within this  
24 Commonwealth or the United States, for someone to predict  
25 that this is going to be a stable decline in crime, I mean,

1 your own annualized report talked about a 5,000 increase  
2 over the last 10 years, so how are we predicting? I mean,  
3 so now we're closing two prisons because it has dropped,  
4 and we tried that, I believe, with Western Penn.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Different circumstances.  
6 Western Penn was a completely---

7 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. After 2 years it  
8 reopened.

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: That's a completely different  
10 circumstance.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Well, it is, but let us  
12 look at those facts. Those were closed because of some of  
13 the same circumstances.

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Not because of the same  
15 circumstances, ma'am. That's inaccurate.

16 They were closed -- SCI Fayette was built  
17 specifically as a replacement for SCI Pittsburgh. It was  
18 not the same circumstances.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. Well, we'll agree to  
20 disagree.

21 And I'd like to ask you about Rockview. I  
22 believe there are inmate costs, per-inmate costs for  
23 Rockview, right? What is that? What are the inmate costs  
24 for Rockview?

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: Isn't it 84?

1 DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: It's in the 80s.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: I believe it's 84. I don't  
3 believe it's included in here.

4 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: It's not included.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: I can get you the specifics,  
6 but I believe it's \$84 a day.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. And is that because,  
8 are there more inmates at Rockview?

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, there are.

10 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay; so we're talking a  
11 few dollars.

12 What I'm trying to figure out is, given the  
13 status of western Pennsylvania, southwestern Pennsylvania,  
14 in unemployment and the economics in southwestern  
15 Pennsylvania, to close two prisons within 60 miles of each  
16 other just, I mean, it just doesn't make sense to me, when  
17 you may be talking \$5, \$10 more per inmate---

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: \$20, ma'am.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay; \$20.

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: \$20 a day per inmate. That's  
21 a significant amount of money.

22 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Well, wait, it probably is  
23 not a significant amount to the people that are having no  
24 idea right now what their lives are going to be like in the  
25 next few years, probably losing jobs.

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: But that's---

2 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: And let's go one step  
3 further.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: But that's not accurate,  
5 ma'am.

6 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: I have people---

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: That is not accurate.

8 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. Well, let's talk  
9 about jobs.

10 I have people coming to me saying they've had an  
11 interview at let's say SCI Fayette, SCI Greene. They've  
12 had their second interview. Now, have those institutions  
13 been told you can't hire right now because we may have to  
14 move---

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, they have.

16 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. So we are now then  
17 affecting the unemployment rate in another way, because we  
18 have veterans, we have people that are applying for these  
19 jobs, and now they're going to be bumped out of those  
20 positions because you're going to move other people into  
21 these positions.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. They're not going to get  
23 access to those positions until we replace the jobs of  
24 people who were displaced, which I heard earlier is  
25 something that we're interested in.



1           REPRESENTATIVE KULA: We are, but I'm sure there  
2 are also people across the State in other parts of the  
3 State where these other prisons are located that maybe we  
4 could have saved some jobs in southwestern Pennsylvania  
5 rather than putting all of them over in the eastern part of  
6 the State, okay?

7           And I also -- we can keep going, but I know other  
8 people have questions.

9           In talking about Greensburg, you have spent  
10 millions upgrading SCI Greensburg in recent years -- a new  
11 steam plant, new housing for inmates, new roofs on  
12 buildings. Were all of those dollars factored in as well  
13 in all of this?

14          SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, and in every of our older  
15 facilities we have spent money and we will continue to  
16 spend money as long as we have inmates in them.

17          REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. Can you tell me a  
18 little bit about the steam plant? The steam plant at  
19 Greensburg.

20          SECRETARY WETZEL: Are you talking about, what do  
21 we call that?

22          DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER: Yeah. We have a  
23 contract with a company out there that we had to move into,  
24 oh, about 9 years ago, somewhere in that facility, in that  
25 range, and it's a 20-year contract.

1           REPRESENTATIVE KULA:   Okay.

2           DEPUTY SECRETARY RINGLER:   And we buy our steam,  
3 you know, from that facility.  And, you know, it's our  
4 plant; we could buy it out.  We're looking at all options  
5 right now of what to do.

6           REPRESENTATIVE KULA:   So the Commonwealth will  
7 not have to buy out this steam plant.

8           SECRETARY WETZEL:   Not necessarily.  We have a  
9 couple options.  One is to move the steam plant.  We have  
10 the potential to move it.  The other is, while it's in the  
11 mothball state, to keep operating it because our vendor is  
12 in the process of getting credit for electric, because it's  
13 one of those that creates electric that you can sell back  
14 to the grid, so it's viable as long as we own the building.

15           So what my guess would be now is that we would  
16 keep operating as long as we own the building.  If it looks  
17 like we want to own the building, if it's not part of the  
18 package or part of the package, the vendor has assured us  
19 that we do have the opportunity to move it, if that makes  
20 sense.

21           REPRESENTATIVE KULA:   Okay.  All right.

22           Also being on Appropriations, and obviously since  
23 the Governor's Budget Address we have been having some  
24 internal budget hearings, I believe your budget asked for  
25 an increase of over \$60 million.

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. If we are saving  
3 \$23 million because of the closing of two prisons, I mean,  
4 can you explain you're asking for a \$60 million increase in  
5 your budget?

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. Every year our budget  
7 goes up \$100 million with just our personnel costs, our  
8 costs to carry -- every year. So every year when we start  
9 our budget process, we start at \$100 million and figure out  
10 how to reduce that \$100 million.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay.

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: So when you take out the  
13 \$23 million and some other tweaks that we've made and  
14 different efficiencies we've created, it ends up being  
15 about a \$60 million increase.

16 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay, even though you won't  
17 have the costs of operating two other prisons.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. Well, I think we can  
20 get into that later in Appropriations.

21 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: You're welcome. Thank you.

23 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Thank  
24 you, Representative Kula.

25 I know we have limited time. We have several

1 Members here. So I want to recognize that Representatives  
2 Sabatina, Toohil, Costa, and Evankovich have joined us as  
3 well.

4 Representative Dean.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
6 Thank you, Mr. Secretary, Deputy Secretaries.

7 Nice to be with you this morning.

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: I'm Madeleine Dean. I'm  
10 new to the Committee, unlike some of my colleagues. So I  
11 wanted to ask you two questions, and one is about process.

12 You walked us through very carefully and  
13 skillfully the numbers, and of course that was a huge part  
14 of your decision, and I understand those calculations were  
15 critical to your decision of what properties might be  
16 closed. Could you tell us also about the process of the  
17 announcement, of considering how you would reveal that  
18 these were being reviewed? You talked about maybe by  
19 October this consideration began. Can you talk us through  
20 what happened in terms of not revealing until January  
21 whatever the closures.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. The final decision was  
23 made the first week of December-ish. The first 10 days of  
24 December is when we were sure that this was the direction  
25 we were going to go in.

1           So then we looked at what timeframe seemed to  
2 make sense as far as -- I mean, we knew that the end of the  
3 budget year was really the goal time, so we decided to make  
4 the announcement right after the holidays. But that's not  
5 the kind of announcement we wanted to make right before the  
6 holidays, so the holidays, really, we decided to make it  
7 after. Right, wrong, or indifferent, that's kind of the  
8 driving force.

9           Up until that point, I hadn't met with the  
10 Governor about it. We discussed it internally in the  
11 department and then discussed it internally within the  
12 Administration. But to get to the last point of discussing  
13 it with the Governor, that took place the first 10 days of  
14 December. I don't remember the exact date. It's somewhere  
15 between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup>, I believe.

16           REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: And maybe I'm wrong, but it  
17 seems to me that nobody is really happy with the way that  
18 announcement rolled out, including you.

19           SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct. Myself included,  
20 yes.

21           REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Okay.

22           SECRETARY WETZEL: And one of the things I  
23 neglected to mention is that during the Senate hearing we  
24 committed to Senator Greenleaf to work with the General  
25 Assembly to come up with a protocol on how these things go,

1 because there was no protocol in place.

2 Pittsburgh was certainly far different because  
3 that was built as a replacement, so you had a couple years  
4 to do that. And I think the suddenness of the population  
5 reduction, the suddenness of legislation passing, really  
6 dictated this timeline. But nobody is happy with how the  
7 process went, so we committed to Senator Greenleaf to put  
8 together a group to come up with a protocol on how these  
9 things go, and certainly we'd be a lot more comfortable if  
10 we all had agreed on a way to do this in the future, and  
11 certainly it's indicated.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: And your thoughts now? As  
13 you look back in your considerations, what do you wish  
14 would have happened in terms of the transparency of that  
15 process?

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: I wish we would have told the  
17 employees before anybody else. That's the big thing, from  
18 my standpoint.

19 I really don't think that -- I think it was the  
20 right decision not to make this announcement before  
21 Christmas. I really do. I wouldn't change that a bit. I  
22 wish we had more time, but I think the budget and getting  
23 that closed by the end of the year, and also getting Benner  
24 occupied when the warranties start running, as soon as we  
25 accept the building and all those things, which is another

1 factor. I'm not sure the circumstances would lead us to a  
2 point where we could do a whole lot different from a  
3 process standpoint, other than that initial notice.

4 Moving forward, the fact that we have SCI Phoenix  
5 going up with 700-ish more beds than SCI Graterford, which  
6 it's replacing, clearly that's on the horizon. Clearly  
7 this legislation was passed with the hopes of reducing  
8 population further. So now we have a 2-year window, and  
9 that's why we certainly appreciate Senator Greenleaf  
10 offering to put together a group so we can decide on what a  
11 process like this should look like.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Okay. And my second  
13 question has to do with facilities. What is the future of  
14 these two facilities?

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: We have a team the  
16 Administration put together that includes the Department of  
17 General Services, who ultimately, once these facilities are  
18 no longer occupied with inmates, ultimately will kind of  
19 oversee it; also the Department of DCED, Community and  
20 Economic Development; as well as our staff to work with the  
21 local jurisdictions and identify potential uses. So that  
22 team, I know the meeting in Cambria County was canceled on  
23 Friday because of the weather. I'm not sure if we have a  
24 reschedule date for that or not. I believe the one in  
25 Westmoreland takes place next week, and then we'll start

1 working with the local jurisdictions on how we move forward  
2 with those properties. But we don't have an answer today  
3 as far as how those properties will be used.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Okay. Thank you very much.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

6 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Thank  
7 you, Representative Dean.

8 And Representative Bradford has a question, but  
9 let me just follow up real quickly on something

10 Representative Dean said: Could you tell us why we're  
11 building Phoenix 1 and 2 at a cost of \$400 million or so  
12 while we're closing existing prisons?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: To replace Graterford.  
14 Graterford is an old, inefficient prison that is expensive  
15 to run and also has some issues, not just maintenance  
16 issues. But, you know, prisons that were built in the  
17 1930s did not contemplate the Americans with Disabilities  
18 Act, did not contemplate a lot of the environmental  
19 requirements we're under now, which we've had some issues  
20 in some of our older prisons.

21 So to replace it, and then when you do a  
22 cost-benefit analysis, you look at over a 20-year period  
23 and you take, even factoring in the \$380 million in  
24 construction costs, you do that over 20 years, it's a lot  
25 less expensive over the lifetime of a prison to replace



1 than to continue to operate Graterford, because at some  
2 point you're going to have to replace it.

3 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Well,  
4 the obvious question would be, instead of replacing, could  
5 we not transfer some of those prisoners to other prisons  
6 and then transfer prisoners into either Cresson or  
7 Greensburg?

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think the cost-benefit  
9 analysis is very -- well, first of all, that wasn't really  
10 contemplated at that time. Again, the purpose in looking  
11 at these facilities as closing only came after legislation,  
12 and certainly Phoenix had started before that. But it was  
13 always designed to be a replacement for Graterford, and  
14 there will always be a function to replace older prisons.  
15 If we can do it onsite, that's ideal, I think. But we have  
16 some other ones that are going to, with some of the new  
17 environmental regulations and, again, the Americans with  
18 Disabilities Act, that we're going to have issues with.

19 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Could  
20 Phoenix not be stopped at this point? I understand it's  
21 very, very early in the process, and it sounds like you  
22 might consider that if it had not in fact been started.

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: No; no. If what I said  
24 sounded like that, no. It makes sense to replace old  
25 Graterford with a new one.

1 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: I'm not  
2 sure I understand that, but I know we have limited---

3 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: Can I just make---

4 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER:

5 Representative Barbin.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: The whole stated purpose  
7 for closing both Greensburg and Cresson is that these are  
8 more expensive facilities.

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: What I don't understand,  
11 you've made Benner -- okay? -- and Benner basically has  
12 2,000 inmates and it costs \$200 million, and you're making  
13 a decision now that is closing both Cresson and Greensburg.  
14 The question that I have is, just to follow up what  
15 Representative Krieger said, why, if it costs \$100,000 per  
16 inmate -- you take \$200 million, you divide it by \$2,000,  
17 you get \$100,000 for each inmate---

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Construction costs.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: I understand that, but  
20 what I don't understand is, if populations are going down,  
21 why are we building two more \$200 million prisons when the  
22 idea is the population is going down? All the other States  
23 around us build low-security prisons that cost \$50 million  
24 or \$30 million. Why are we building two more since the  
25 populations for everybody, violent or nonviolent, are going

1 down? Why are we still spending \$200 million, or \$100,000  
2 a prisoner, and at the same time saying we're going to  
3 close Cresson and Greensburg? That doesn't seem to make  
4 mathematical sense.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: If you're talking about Benner  
6 or in particular if you're talking about Phoenix, they're  
7 two different things.

8 With Benner, that wasn't an option to not -- it  
9 was too far along to stop that one. If you're talking  
10 about Phoenix, there's a real function to replace  
11 Graterford. And if our population keeps going down, it  
12 will end up replacing another facility or two, so we will  
13 realize significant cost savings. And everybody in this  
14 chamber claims that you want to save money in corrections.  
15 This is what it looks like.

16 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: But why are we spending  
17 \$200 million to house 2,000 prisoners?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: That's not the yearly costs.  
19 The \$200 million that you're referring to is the  
20 construction costs.

21 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: But it's still  
22 \$200 million.

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: Absolutely; absolutely.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: And it's \$200 million for  
25 two more new prisons.

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, to replace an old---

2 REPRESENTATIVE BARBIN: And at the same time  
3 we're doing that, we're taking these older prisons that are  
4 operational, that don't cost \$200 million, and we're  
5 closing them.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. And I'll tell you, we  
7 can provide you with the cost-benefit analysis, and if you  
8 look over the lifetime -- we will provide you with those  
9 numbers, and it is obvious; the numbers will speak for  
10 themselves.

11 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: We'd  
12 certainly like to have that, Mr. Secretary.

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: Absolutely.

14 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: And I  
15 think Representative Bradford has a question. I think this  
16 will be the final question for you.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

18 MINORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BRADFORD: Thank  
19 you, Chairman Krieger.

20 Secretary, I think your last point, which is a  
21 good one, which is the cost of corrections going down will  
22 have an impact, I can tell you, I think actually the  
23 Administration should be lauded for its efforts, and  
24 frankly, the Legislature, to start looking at corrections  
25 costs. And frankly, it's outpacing almost every other area

1 of our budget.

2 And there are going to be winners and losers and  
3 there are going to be facilities closed, and that's the  
4 nature of it. But I think it's not fair to insinuate that  
5 any question about the process, which is admittedly  
6 horribly flawed and really didn't have the proper amount of  
7 respect for our State employees, so I think it's a little  
8 disingenuous to say that asking questions about which  
9 facilities and about a process that was just fundamentally  
10 flawed, that that somehow is defending the status quo in  
11 terms of corrections.

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: I didn't say that, sir, and if  
13 that's the impression you got, I didn't say that at all.

14 MINORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BRADFORD: Okay.

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't know where you're  
16 getting that from.

17 I have acknowledged that the process is flawed.  
18 I've committed to the General Assembly to work with them to  
19 develop a process and a protocol that makes more sense. I  
20 have not spoken at all about the process.

21 MINORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BRADFORD: No, no.  
22 And I think you've got to understand from an outside  
23 observer, and frankly, I'm hundreds of miles to the east of  
24 these two facilities, when you admit that the process is so  
25 flawed but, don't worry, the substance and the outcome are

1 totally fine, that creates a huge disconnect and that  
2 creates a lot of the types of questions. And then you add  
3 in the tumult of having Representatives from the affected  
4 districts who have to go back to explain why the process is  
5 so bad, but don't worry, take the Governor's word on it,  
6 this is the right thing for you, there's a disconnect  
7 there.

8           SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, but I disagree with that  
9 characterization. I mean, you say that there's -- I mean,  
10 we're here for a hearing. The second we were called for a  
11 hearing from the Senate, we made ourselves available  
12 immediately. Well, this hearing would have taken place  
13 earlier had I not already had something prescheduled. I  
14 mean, I have no problem answering questions and providing  
15 data, and the data is on the thing.

16           Listen, I believe it's appropriate that there are  
17 questions and that you guys get the answers that you get  
18 to.

19           MINORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BRADFORD: Right.

20           SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't agree with the  
21 characterization that we don't want to be questioned. I  
22 think it's completely appropriate, and we've made ourselves  
23 as available as we possibly can for those questions.

24           MINORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BRADFORD: And  
25 again, I think you're reading into it too much what I'm

1 saying. I think you've been very forthcoming in trying to  
2 answer the questions and the timeline. In fact, I think  
3 some of the assurances that you've given to Senator  
4 Greenleaf about really doing kind of an after-action  
5 review, find out what, frankly, went so wrong here, find  
6 out why the process was flawed, really looking into kind of  
7 curing some of those defects, because obviously this isn't  
8 the first prison that has ever been closed, it won't be the  
9 last. So really I think there's a learning opportunity by  
10 going back and saying, what went so wrong here?

11           So please don't read in the fact that I'm saying  
12 that there's not -- you're clearly acknowledging that the  
13 process was bad. What I'm saying is, understand there's a  
14 disconnect if you're saying the process is bad but  
15 basically assume that everything on the back side is fine  
16 and dandy.

17           From my own experience in my own district, the  
18 Administration has continually pushed privatizing a  
19 forensic unit at one of our State hospitals, and we have  
20 some of the most, you know, criminally insane folks in the  
21 Commonwealth that are housed there. And every time we find  
22 out about it, it's the day before the budget gets  
23 announced, and it's troubling that this seems to be a way  
24 of doing business. It's troubling to the communities that  
25 are affected; it's troubling to the workers who will lose

1 their jobs. And I think it's something that needs to be  
2 dealt with, not just in terms of these two facilities that  
3 were chosen for closure but really holistically coming up  
4 with an idea of why this continues to happen, why our  
5 workers are feeling, you know, so unsettled. Their  
6 pensions are in question. Their jobs are in question.  
7 Where they're going to work is in question. I think we  
8 deserve better.

9           So again, I appreciate your forthcomingness, and  
10 I think actually a lot of the questions that I had were  
11 covered by Representative Dean about what went wrong and  
12 really, you know, kind of that timeline. So thank you for  
13 the time, and I appreciate your forthcomingness.

14           SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, and I think once we are  
15 able to provide you, and, Chairman, if you want regular  
16 updates, monthly updates on placements, as we committed to,  
17 I think you'll have a better level that the employees are  
18 being taken care of. I think you'll have a better sense  
19 for that as we provide you the specificity of that  
20 information on placements.

21           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: And  
22 thank you, Mr. Secretary. I guess this final comment.

23           I think we continue to have questions. I thank  
24 you that you have been here. I certainly think the more  
25 information you can give us, the better. I still have



1 questions with regard to the costs derived from your own  
2 numbers, and if you can provide additional information to  
3 satisfy the Members of the Committee on that, I think it  
4 would be very helpful.

5 And again, I would urge you going forward that  
6 more light is better than less, and we could have avoided  
7 some of this. But again, I thank you for your forthright  
8 chat.

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: And I appreciate it. And I  
10 would encourage you to reach out through Diana Woodside,  
11 our Legislative Director, and if you'd like to meet with  
12 Mr. Ringler and go over the spreadsheets, he can do that  
13 for hours if you're into that.

14 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: I would,  
15 and I certainly would ask you to continue to give us  
16 information. I know Appropriations is coming up; there are  
17 going to be additional questions there, and I think you  
18 probably anticipated that. But thank you.

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

20 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: All  
21 right. We have, to testify, Mr. Robert Storm and  
22 Mr. Jason Bloom.

23 While they're setting up, we were also joined by  
24 Representative Brown.

25 Mr. Storm and Mr. Bloom are with the Pennsylvania

1 State Corrections Officers Association. So, gentlemen, you  
2 can go in whichever order you choose, and you can begin  
3 when you're ready.

4 MR. STORM: Thank you, Representative.

5 Chairman Marsico, Chairman Caltagirone, and  
6 Members of the Committee, good morning.

7 My name is Robert Storm. I have the honor and  
8 privilege to serve as the Vice President of the  
9 Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association,  
10 consisting of more than 10,000 brave men and women who  
11 every day walk, unarmed, through the toughest blocks in the  
12 State. Their job is to protect the communities surrounding  
13 the facility by maintaining security, order, and discipline  
14 inside the walls of our State system.

15 I wish to thank you for the opportunity to share  
16 with you the perspective of my members as well as the harm  
17 done to them with the announced closings of the State  
18 corrections facilities in Greensburg and Cresson.

19 We have many concerns with these closings. One  
20 of the biggest is how we and our members and their families  
21 were notified. On Monday, January 7, PSCOA President  
22 Roy Pinto was notified by the Governor's Office of  
23 Administration that a major announcement affecting the  
24 Department of Corrections would be made at 10 a.m.  
25 Wednesday, January 9. Further details would be provided.

1           At that point, the individual from OA requested a  
2 2 p.m. meeting on the afternoon of the 9th. Mr. Pinto  
3 requested, on behalf of our members, any information  
4 regarding the major announcement, but again, his request  
5 was refused.

6           On Tuesday evening of January 8, several media  
7 outlets reported that the SCIs in Greensburg and Cresson  
8 were to be closed. Like many of my fellow officers, I was  
9 shocked and angry that our members and our leadership team  
10 had to receive the information from a news leak rather than  
11 the appropriate notification through the Governor's Office  
12 and the Department of Corrections.

13           On the morning of January 9, President Pinto  
14 received a phone call from the Governor's Office of  
15 Administration officially informing him that Greensburg and  
16 Cresson were to be closed. This is not the way our  
17 association and our members should have been treated. By  
18 their actions, it is clear the Administration wanted to  
19 make it as difficult as possible for us to provide any  
20 measure of notification or answers to the over 600 affected  
21 employees at Greensburg and Cresson of the closings.

22           Why would they do that? Is this what we have  
23 come to in our society?

24           Do you know how some of our members actually  
25 learned of the news? Unbelievably, from inmates. That's

1 right, inmates.

2 As you can imagine, we were inundated with phone  
3 calls from members and their families affected by the  
4 closings. Many questions arose over these facilities and  
5 why they would be closed.

6 Had the Department of Corrections chosen to work  
7 with us and our members, we would have helped to ease the  
8 impact on our members. Doesn't common sense tell us that  
9 that would be the right thing to do? Don't we owe the  
10 people who handle the State's most violent criminals at  
11 least that much?

12 Our members are in danger every day. Some have  
13 been brutally beaten, others are forced to undergo constant  
14 testing for disease after inmates have gassed them. Do you  
15 know what gassing is? Gassing is when an inmate throws a  
16 bag of urine or feces at an officer or is spat upon. Some  
17 inmates suffer from various diseases, including HIV.

18 The health risks of the job are incredible, yet  
19 their welfare meant nothing during this process. These  
20 hardworking public servants are left scrambling, and some  
21 simply won't be able to keep the job that they were trained  
22 to do. I'm sorry, but this is just wrong. In fact, it's  
23 horrible and it shows no compassion.

24 As upset and angry as we were the day we received  
25 an hour's notice before the announcement, it doesn't

1 compare to how we felt January 15 and January 16 when we  
2 met with the affected employees and their families and had  
3 to hear the horror stories that they were going to go  
4 through.

5           Everything these families will face is because of  
6 the quick, uncooperative action of the department. These  
7 actions appear to have been made without any consideration  
8 for the impact on the employees and families of these  
9 institutions, along with an apparent disregard for the  
10 impact on the local communities.

11           I realize we all occasionally get blindsided by  
12 unexpected events over which we have no control and we must  
13 make the necessary adjustments and move on, but this did  
14 not need to be such a blindsided event. In fact, they  
15 actually allowed one of our members to transfer into the  
16 Cresson facility in December. How unfair was that?

17           As bad as the harm is to those in Greensburg and  
18 Cresson, there is an additional fear and concern throughout  
19 the entire Commonwealth expressed to us by other COs and  
20 their families: Who is next? I think we heard that today.

21           Once again, it gets worse. I would like to share  
22 with you a letter sent by the department to the inmates  
23 following the announcement. No such consideration was  
24 shown to the men and women sworn to protect the citizens of  
25 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

1           I'm going to just high-point the letter. I don't  
2 know if you have it in your packet. The letter was from  
3 John Wetzel, Secretary of Corrections, on January 9, 2013.  
4 That was the day we were notified that the prisons would be  
5 closed, and basically the letter states that, you know, the  
6 inmates, no other services would be interrupted, okay? So,  
7 you know, our family services are interrupted, but their  
8 phone calls, their visits, their programming, you know,  
9 would not be interrupted.

10           During the testimony before the Senate Judiciary  
11 Committee, Corrections Secretary Wetzel acknowledged that  
12 the department started internal discussions on the closing  
13 of the facilities as early as July, yet they kept it to  
14 themselves. Why they chose this path, I do not know,  
15 because an excellent model for inclusion in the closure  
16 process was readily available, a process that would have  
17 provided opportunities for all stakeholders to have input.

18           In 2005, the Federal Government implemented the  
19 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission to provide  
20 an open process to carefully and thoughtfully evaluate the  
21 closing of a military base. They recognized that while the  
22 military value of the base was of compelling importance,  
23 so, too, was the impact upon their host communities and the  
24 personnel assigned to those bases. In fact, if you look at  
25 the mission statement for the commission, it includes the

1 following:

2           "While giving priority to the criteria of  
3 military value, the commission will also take into account  
4 the human impact of the base closures and will consider the  
5 possible economic, environmental, and other effects on the  
6 surrounding communities."

7           The commission held community meetings in various  
8 locations that had been identified for possible base  
9 closure. They solicited comments and suggestions from  
10 community leaders, area businesses, and employees. When  
11 the base closures were announced, the communities and  
12 employees that were impacted at least had fair warning and  
13 were given the opportunity to present their case for  
14 keeping their base open. As important, community leaders  
15 were able to plan for the worst scenario.

16           Ladies and gentlemen of this Committee, I ask  
17 you, was this too much to ask that our State Government  
18 demonstrate the same compassion and concern for its  
19 employees and the impacted communities? Seldom is the best  
20 decision made in a vacuum, and I believe this is such an  
21 example.

22           Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.  
23 I'd be happy to answer any questions.

24           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Thank  
25 you, Mr. Storm.

1           Mr. Bloom, if we could ask you, and then we'll  
2 have our questions of both of you together.

3           MR. BLOOM: No problem, sir.

4           Good morning, Chairman and Committee Members. My  
5 name is Jason Bloom, and I'm the western region Vice  
6 President for the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers  
7 Association.

8           The closings of both SCI Greensburg and  
9 SCI Cresson not only took us by surprise, it took the  
10 employees by surprise, the communities, and I believe you  
11 all as well.

12           The Department of Corrections didn't have the  
13 forethought to let anybody know. In fact, the department  
14 treated this announcement like it was guarding some  
15 top-secret launch codes. Then after the announcement, the  
16 department expected members to make life-altering decisions  
17 in the blink of an eye, even though they sat on this  
18 information for a lengthy period of time.

19           If a member was unable to transfer to one of the  
20 institutions somewhat close, our members at SCI Greensburg  
21 had to make hard decisions and answer difficult questions.  
22 Some of those questions would be:

23           Am I going to stay employed with the DOC?

24           Can I sell my house?

25           What are the schools like where I'm moving for my



1 children?

2 Also, are there jobs available for my spouse?

3 Ladies and gentlemen, these are legitimate  
4 questions, and they're difficult for working families to  
5 answer even in the best of circumstances.

6 There has to be a better way. In fact, the  
7 Department of Corrections, if they had come to the PSCOA  
8 months ago, our members would have had ample time to look  
9 at these options to these questions. I don't believe it is  
10 too much to treat the employees who work such dangerous  
11 jobs with respect. I don't think you disagree with that.

12 There also is a new prison being built at  
13 SCI Graterford, as we heard earlier. Will the State just  
14 replace the old SCI Graterford, or, as we've seen here,  
15 will they close other prisons and fold their populations in  
16 the new ones and we'll be answering these same questions  
17 later on?

18 Under the current system, no one is going to know  
19 until it's too late. The Secretary said that they need a  
20 protocol. I think it's really simple. It's a commonsense  
21 protocol. We're not asking too much: Let the people know  
22 that are all involved, and we can get together and sit down  
23 and discuss it and see where we can go with this.

24 It is our hope that by working with you, the  
25 Administration will see the benefit of having an open and

1 transparent process that educates employees and communities  
2 and, at the very least, allows families to better prepare  
3 and to make life-altering decisions.

4 Thank you for your time.

5 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Thank  
6 you, gentlemen.

7 And we have been joined also by Representative  
8 Waters and Representative Vanessa Brown.

9 Representative Dean.

10 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Storm and  
11 Mr. Bloom.

12 And Mr. Storm in particular, thank you for your  
13 compelling testimony. You tell the story and the narrative  
14 and the people behind a decision that was so coldly kept in  
15 the dark. So really my question is relatively simple, and  
16 in part you've answered it, but how do we signal to this  
17 Administration effectively that when decisions are made  
18 about facilities and inmates and dollars and numbers that  
19 you actually have to think about people and be more  
20 compassionate and respectful and not dehumanize those who  
21 work there and the communities that surround them?

22 So I know that in both of your testimonies you  
23 suggested the idea of open the conversation to you and to  
24 your members and to the rest of the community. Any other  
25 words of wisdom that you can offer the Administration?

1           MR. BLOOM: To tell you the truth, ma'am, it's as  
2 simple as, I believe as Mr. Storm said, you can't make  
3 these decisions in a vacuum in a room where you don't have  
4 any outside people looking at it; you don't have a bunch of  
5 "yes" men saying, oh, this is the correct way to do it. I  
6 think you need opposing thoughts and actually get the whole  
7 picture, not just what you want to see but what you need to  
8 hear -- the tough decisions; the other questions that they  
9 weren't asking themselves when they made these decisions.  
10 I think it's that simple.

11           MR. STORM: An open line of communication with  
12 us; the department; you know, cost savings. I know the  
13 Secretary came to us when he was first appointed when it  
14 came to cost savings and we gave him some ideas. Did they  
15 use them? No, but---

16           I mean, we need that open dialogue. We may be  
17 able to ease that impact on our end with our members, you  
18 know, if these measures needed to be taken.

19           REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Just one follow-up.

20           Since the January 9 announcement, have you seen  
21 -- and the admission by the Secretary and others that this  
22 was poorly rolled out, to say the best -- have you seen a  
23 change? Had they reached out to you afterward?

24           MR. STORM: We had to negotiate a change. We met  
25 with the department; we met with the Office of

1 Administration. There were issues of placement of the  
2 officers and their families. We all know, you know, the  
3 60-mile radius, so-called. So we basically negotiated, did  
4 some impact bargaining on opening up some extra positions  
5 at some of the jails that were closer to Greensburg that  
6 alleviated some of the impact.

7 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Thank you very much.

8 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Thank  
9 you, Representative.

10 Representative Kula.

11 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Thank you.

12 Good morning. Thank you for being here.

13 MR. STORM: Good morning.

14 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: And I guess as an elected  
15 official of this Commonwealth, I myself apologize for what  
16 has happened to all of you.

17 MR. BLOOM: Thank you.

18 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: You're welcome.

19 And I believe and that was the point, one of the  
20 points I was trying to bring out with Secretary Wetzel is,  
21 this Committee in particular has always been very open, and  
22 Chairman Marsico and Chairman Caltagirone have worked very  
23 diligently with the Department of Corrections and we have  
24 had many hearings trying to see what we can do to not only  
25 alleviate crime but to solve an overcrowding problem that

1 last year we talked about inmates being sent to other  
2 States. So here we are, a year later, talking about, gee,  
3 we don't have to send anybody anywhere; as a matter of  
4 fact, we have too much room. But we have always had an  
5 open dialogue, and that's what I tried to impress upon  
6 Secretary Wetzel, is we should -- you know, that dialogue  
7 could have been opened with us, opened with us where we  
8 meet with and not only do we have hearings with the  
9 Department of Corrections, we have hearings with your  
10 department also. So we kind of have a mix of everybody in  
11 all of this.

12 But the Secretary indicated about bringing in a  
13 team to kind of meet with the employees. Has that  
14 happened?

15 MR. BLOOM: Not that I'm aware of.

16 MR. STORM: I believe it was a little too much  
17 too late, because after some of the meetings we've had with  
18 the department, that was one of our concerns. And at that  
19 point in time, when the closures happened, there were no  
20 teams there. We were handing out the questionnaires, okay?  
21 Then after the fact I believe they had brought some people  
22 in and took some questions.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. Who brought -- the  
24 Department of Corrections brought people in?

25 MR. STORM: I believe so, ma'am. I'm not totally

1 sure on that.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. So as far as where  
3 people are going, have people been notified yet?

4 MR. STORM: No, not yet.

5 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. Have people -- I  
6 mean, are you anticipating retirements from those two  
7 facilities?

8 MR. STORM: Yes.

9 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Do you have any idea how  
10 many that might be?

11 MR. STORM: Right now, I could give you a rough  
12 number of 20 to 30, from what I've seen.

13 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Which is kind of a drop in  
14 the bucket basically.

15 MR. STORM: Yes.

16 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: And do you know if this  
17 announcement brought on these retirements? I mean, people  
18 that really didn't want to retire but rather than having to  
19 travel or move their families?

20 MR. STORM: Absolutely. You know, we've had  
21 individuals say, hey, I have to retire because I just can't  
22 move; I can't pick up my family.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay.

24 MR. STORM: And they don't have enough time,  
25 but---

1           REPRESENTATIVE KULA: And I don't know if you can  
2 answer this, and it's something I wanted to ask Secretary  
3 Wetzel. I just kind of didn't at that moment. But the  
4 food and everything that is provided to these prisons,  
5 where is that from? I mean, do you know? Is it local? Do  
6 they buy that locally within those communities?

7           MR. BLOOM: It's outside vendors, but I'm not  
8 sure where exactly it comes from.

9           REPRESENTATIVE KULA: Okay. Maybe that's  
10 something we can ask of him. I'm looking at the economic  
11 impact within those areas.

12           But I'm sure all of your brothers and sisters  
13 have children, some that may be almost graduation age, the  
14 thoughts of changing a school and all of that. So I feel  
15 for all of you. I'm sorry this has happened and I wish  
16 this had been handled better, and some better alternatives,  
17 I think, could have been put forth.

18           Thank you for your testimony.

19           MR. STORM: Thank you.

20           MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Thank  
21 you, Representative, and thank you, gentlemen.

22           And we have one more testifier. We're running  
23 rather short on time, so I'd ask Mr. Garry Miklinski to  
24 come forward. And as he does that, gentlemen, I wanted to  
25 just ask you to let your members know that this Committee

1 does cooperate probably better than any Committee in the  
2 House, and I think it was a bipartisan frustration with how  
3 this was done. And we are not satisfied with the answers,  
4 and I think we are going to attempt to continue to get  
5 answers on this.

6 MR. STORM: I appreciate that, Representative,  
7 Chairman. Thank you.

8 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Okay.  
9 We have Garry Miklinski, a corrections officer at  
10 SCI Cresson. Sir, you can begin when you're ready.

11 MR. MIKLINSKI: Thank you.

12 Good morning, first of all. The reason I'm  
13 testifying today is because when I was raised, I was raised  
14 and I raised my children to tell the truth, to be honest,  
15 to be open, treat others with respect, and don't lie.

16 When I heard about the closing of SCI Cresson and  
17 SCI Greensburg, I was in shock. The announcement from  
18 Secretary Wetzel was that the prisons were being closed  
19 because of the condition and age of the facilities. I'm a  
20 corrections officer who works at SCI Cresson. I've been  
21 there for 21 years, and I have seen the improvements that  
22 happened. Something just doesn't sound right to me. Then  
23 I heard the statement that the employees would be placed  
24 into positions within 50 miles. Again, something didn't  
25 sound right to me.



1           After the shock came anger. I was angry at the  
2 way we were treated, we were notified. Some of us were at  
3 home, some on shift working. We don't have televisions.  
4 The inmates came up and told them, we're closing; we'll be  
5 closed by June. They're in the middle of a dining hall.  
6 They have 250 inmates around them -- not a very nice place  
7 to be.

8           I believe we're employees of the department.  
9 We're State employees and taxpayers. Most of all, we're  
10 people. People deserve respect, people deserve honesty,  
11 and people deserve to be informed.

12           I go on and on about the anger, the questions.  
13 The rest of my testimony I believe you have in your  
14 packets.

15           If I'm held to discipline, I'm held to discipline  
16 in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the Department of  
17 Corrections. Section B, No. 10, says, "Employees are  
18 expected to treat their peers, supervisors and the general  
19 public with respect and conduct themselves properly and  
20 professionally at all times; unacceptable conduct or  
21 insolence will not be tolerated." I've seen people fired,  
22 I've seen people given days off without pay, and I've seen  
23 people terminated. That's a two-way street. Every person  
24 in the department has to sign that, including Secretary  
25 Wetzel. I believe he should be held as responsible to this

1 as I am.

2 As a noncommissioned officer in the Navy, in my  
3 house, in the way I raise my children, I've held myself as  
4 an example. I believe you lead by example. I've tried to  
5 treat the inmates that way, I've tried to treat the public  
6 that way, and I have definitely treated my children that  
7 way.

8 More than 4 weeks ago since the SCI Cresson  
9 announcement was made and SCI Greensburg, we still have no  
10 idea where we're going. We don't know what days we're  
11 going to be off. We don't know what kind of vacation we  
12 can take, if we can take one.

13 We haven't heard the actual reasons why. We've  
14 heard six or seven different reasons why they were closed.  
15 We heard about two or three more today. I don't believe  
16 any one reason.

17 When I go to work and I walk into the  
18 institution, you know, my fellow COs have my back. I know  
19 they have my back. Up until this announcement was made and  
20 the way it was made, I thought the department had my back,  
21 not sticking a shank in my back but had it.

22 I'd like to thank you all for giving me the  
23 opportunity to testify. If you have any questions, I'll be  
24 more than happy to answer them, and I have made my  
25 decision.

1 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Well,  
2 thank you, sir.

3 We're running short of time, but Representative  
4 Dean just has, hopefully, a short question.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: It's actually just a  
6 comment.

7 Thank you for your testimony.

8 MR. MIKLINSKI: You're welcome.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DEAN: Central to this decision,  
10 it's the people, and you've eloquently told us how this  
11 affected the people. Thank you.

12 MR. MIKLINSKI: Thank you.

13 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Again,  
14 thank you, sir, for coming, and this is going to conclude  
15 our hearing -- hold on; hold on. I'm sorry.

16 Gary Haluska. I'm sorry I overlooked you.

17 REPRESENTATIVE HALUSKA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 I would just like to touch on a few things.  
19 We're talking about waste in government. When you look at  
20 SCI Cresson, and I just have a little bit of information  
21 here, in '04 they built a new J Block, totally upgraded the  
22 electrical system through the total prison, and put a  
23 backup generator there -- millions of dollars. All these  
24 things have happened in the last 5 years. The fiber-optic  
25 upgrades were \$167,000. The fire alarm system that they

1 put in, \$3.5 million; perimeter fencing, \$900,000;  
2 replacement of the fire equipment there, \$30,000; a new  
3 elevator in the administration building, a million dollars;  
4 new yard fencing for the small and large yard, I don't have  
5 a number on that; replace the guard towers, \$700,000; a new  
6 dental unit, we don't have that price, and a new staff  
7 locker room; an ESCO project, estimated about \$40 million;  
8 upgrades and emergencies, everything else. The new  
9 computer network was a quarter of a million dollars. The  
10 new biomass boiler that was just put in a year and a half  
11 ago, \$2.5 million; an upgrade to the fence system, a  
12 million; all fire sprinklers brought up to code; the  
13 cable-lock improvements; a new housing unit, J Block, which  
14 I just talked about; a new inmate dining hall that was  
15 completed in 2000; upgrades to the CCD-TV cameras was done;  
16 and there were a couple of things that were still on the  
17 books. But these are millions and millions of dollars that  
18 we spent in this institution, and when everybody talks  
19 about how poor Cresson is, the facility, that's not what  
20 I'm hearing, you know, from the people that work there,  
21 that this prison has been modernized right along. It sits  
22 on 500 acres of property up there in Cresson.

23           So I just want the taxpayers to know that we're  
24 walking away from all of this money. The way this was  
25 done, there was nothing to the local officials, to myself,

1 the Senators, as we know. Nobody came to us and said,  
2 look, we have plans on closing this facility in the next  
3 year or so; do we have alternatives to use this facility;  
4 we have a huge investment here, and I really think the  
5 Administration dropped the ball by just pulling the rug out  
6 from everybody and not even having a plan to utilize the  
7 taxpayers' dollars that have been spent here. That's just  
8 something that I wanted to let the Committee know.

9 And I'm sure Greensburg, I don't know about their  
10 prison, but I'm sure there are many improvements there and  
11 it's something that we're just going to walk away from,  
12 and, you know, I think that's a real poor way to spend  
13 taxpayers' dollars.

14 MAJORITY SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KRIEGER: Thank  
15 you, Representative.

16 Again, I appreciate those comments. We have the  
17 same litany; we could make almost the same speech with  
18 regard to SCI Greensburg and one of the things that has  
19 troubled us.

20 Again, I thank all of you for being here. I want  
21 to just, I guess in closing, say that just as reinvestment  
22 was something we supported and we think it's a good thing,  
23 we think it's a good thing to be efficient, but we have an  
24 oversight role to make sure that indeed that's why these  
25 decisions are being made. And again, I still think some of

1 us have questions, and I look forward to further answers  
2 from the department. But thank you.

3

4

(The hearing concluded at 10:55 a.m.)

1                   I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings  
2 are a true and accurate transcription produced from audio  
3 on the said proceedings and that this is a correct  
4 transcript of the same.

5  
6  
7                   Debra B. Miller

8                   Committee Hearing Coordinator/

9                   Legislative Reporter

10                  Notary Public