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Testimony to the Little Hoover Commission  
February 27, 2003

1. How California could change parole policies- particularly revocation policies- to increase parolee success, reduce the number of parolees who are re-incarcerated and improve public safety.

The first measure that California could take is to look at the Technical Violations of Parole. There are various technical violations that should be handled differently. The way the law reads is that parolees that have been convicted of violent offenses which fall under the Penal Code definition of 667.5 and serious offenses under P.C. 1192.7c have to appear for a hearing before the Board of Prison Terms (BPT). If either the number of the Technical Violations of Parole was reduced or violations for the P.C. 667.5 and 1192.7c could be handled at the Unit level by the Unit Supervisor along with the Parole Agents recommendation, this would truly make a difference in the number of re-incarcerations.

The second measure the state could take to reduce the re-incarceration rate of parolees is to provide funding for more residential substance abuse treatment facilities for parolees to be placed in when they have a positive anti-narcotic test. There are many Field Parole Agents that are actually at a loss as to where to send parolees for residential substance abuse treatment. Unit Supervisors are only given a limited amount of funds for the Units and substance abuse treatment is not included in that. All of the facilities that the state actually had contracts with were always full. There have been many cases that resort to returning people to custody because there were no funds for treatment. Many of my return to custody cases involved drug use and absconding because of drug use.

The Board of Prison Terms (BPT) should be strongly considered in the quest for lower recidivism among parolees. They are the only entity that has the final authority to return parolees to custody. The Parole Agents can only recommend whether the parolee should be returned to custody or not. In addition, the amount of time given by the Board of Prison Terms needs review. They set the standard for length of time on parole violation for each charge. An oversight committee needs to look at amount of time give for violations. If this could be done correctly, parole revocation terms could be more effective in reducing the prison population

We have seen recent budget proposals that suggest low-level offenders such as Petty Theft, Fraudulent Checks etc. receive early release to save funds. This will not help public safety. I have supervised these people and violations occur just as often as with higher-level offenders. The lower level offenders seem to be able to conceal crimes because they are not supervised as closely.

2. The role of the Parole Agent in helping parolees successfully transition from prison to the community. Whether, as some observers have suggested, there is an inherent conflict between the supervision and rehabilitation functions of parole agents.

Answer- There is no inherent conflict between the supervision and rehabilitation functions of Parole Agents. Parole Agents are trained to be well rounded and wear many hats. The parole agent testing and interview process attempts to identify people who meet these qualifications. It is not difficult to supervise and assist parolees to reintegrate at the same time. When you have someone on your caseload, there are stated expectations given verbally as well as written regarding the conditions and special conditions of parole. I can't imagine if the two entities; supervision and rehabilitation, were separate functions. When a parolee is released from prison and you are charged with supervising them, you learn everything about that parolee, his family or significant others, his/her habits, hangouts, likes and dislikes. The ideal situation would be for the same person who knows the case inside and out be the one to supervise, rehabilitate or arrest if necessary. There are relationships established. The parole agent becomes the one they trust and respect. The parolee will come and admit things and actually turn himself or herself into the parole agent prior to anyone else.

3. How including the parole agent classification in the career path for correctional officers has impacted how parole is administered and parole outcomes.

There has been massive hiring of Correctional Officers in last few years, because correctional officer classification have been easiest to hirer and it takes large amount of time for non CDC staff to pass the background. Correction Officer who are properly trained make good Parole Agents and have little or no impact on success or failure of a parolee. If supervisors are doing their jobs and training staff, the outcome should be the same.

The key component in reducing recidivism rate is Parole Agents having the training, experience and tools needed to perform their jobs.

4. Whether the State should consider reorganizing or restructuring parole to make parole management the responsibility of local entities or partnerships among community entities.

Answer- Parole can be successful in the structure that is currently in place. There needs to be supervision of these felons in the community. We can't forget the mission statement of parole, keeping the community safe and at the same time assisting the parolee to reintegrate in to the community. Let's not forget, we are dealing with people that have committed crimes against society. With the Parole Agents help, many parolees upon release will make an effort in getting their lives on track. However, there are many that return and become worse offenders than before they were incarcerated which requires Experienced Parole Agents supervising them.

The community partnerships and local entities must be pro parole assistance. If the many local and state agencies partnered with parole were mandated to assist, there would be less recidivism. The Department of Rehabilitation should give every parolee an evaluation upon entering the community to determine eligibility for services. The Department of Social Services (DPSS), the Employment Development Department (EDD), the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) should also be a mandated entity to assist in the reintegration process. It should be like an assembly line.

If your real question is giving the local entities the job of parole supervision, the parolee would not receive any assistance or supervision. The counties would spend the money returning parolee's to prison and transfer the remaining money to social service agencies that are always in need of cash. Just look at current budget crisis, the parolee would become a non-person and just an addition budget item for the counties.