



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives
Representative Walt Blackman (R-6)
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

String of Scandals at Arizona Corrections Department Demands Permanent Independent Oversight

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – State Representative Walt Blackman (R-6), Chairman of the Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) Committee, today responded to new and ongoing scandals at the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR).

“Enough is enough,” said Representative Blackman. **“ADCRR is a bureaucracy run amok. It’s not about bad leadership or a few bad apples. Every day seems to bring a new scandal or crisis, and the only reason we learn about them is because whistleblowers go to the media. Arizona taxpayers spend \$1.3 billion a year on our prisons, and they deserve better transparency and accountability. The only way to stop and prevent the problems in our prisons is to create permanent, independent, professional prison oversight. Doing nothing will get more of the same results, waste millions, and jeopardize public safety.”**

In just the first two months of 2021, news reports have revealed:

- The state was fined \$1.1 million because ADCRR is ignoring court orders to improve inmate health care. This is the second million-dollar fine ADCRR has received since 2018. As of 2019, the state had paid almost \$10 million in attorney’s fees in this lawsuit. Arizona could face up to \$17 million in fines if ADCRR does not improve.
- A prison supervisor has been fired and is being prosecuted for sexually assaulting other staff members. A victim is suing the state and ADCRR alleging that management ignored the harassment.
- The new \$24 million inmate management database ADCRR uses cannot calculate sentences correctly, potentially resulting in inmates being held in prison past their release dates. ADCRR allegedly knew about these and other database problems for more than a year and told staff not to report them.
- Two inmates convicted of dangerous and sexual offenses escaped and were recaptured a week later.
- Jewish prisoners are suing ADCRR because they cannot receive the kosher meals required by their faith.

[HB 2167](#), sponsored by Representative Blackman, would create an independent oversight office with the power to inspect prisons, investigate and help resolve reoccurring complaints, speak

confidentially with staff and inmates, issue public reports and data on its findings, and recommend improvements. Oversight bodies with similar authority exist in Washington State, Texas, Ohio, and New Jersey.

HB 2167 was passed by the House on Monday and awaits a vote in the Senate.

Walt Blackman is a Republican member of the Arizona House of Representatives serving Legislative District 6, which includes portions of Coconino, Yavapai, Navajo and Gila counties.

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