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Texas Commission on Jail Standards
Legislative Appropriations Request, FY 2012-2013

FULLY FUND THE TEXAS COMMISSION ON JAIL STANDARDS (TCJS)

BACKGROUND

In the face of a potential 15% budget cut (including across-the-board 5% agency budget cuts and an extra 10% budget cut), **TCJS could potentially lose 2-3 staff members, possibly inspectors** (out of a current total of 5 inspectors).

Without inspections, TCJS will not be able to fully realize its critical mission to set constitutional jail standards, conduct facility inspections, and enforce compliance with rules and procedures – all of which keep Texas jails safe, well regulated, and run by educated, professional leadership.

Let's not forget why TCJS was established. In the early 1970's, various lawsuits were filed against Texas counties for poor conditions of confinement in local jails, as well as for the lack of regulated and funded inspections of those jail facilities. In 1975, and with the urging and support of various groups (including the Sheriff's Association of Texas), the 64th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 272, which was signed into law by Governor Dolph Briscoe. This bill created the nine-member Texas Commission on Jail Standards, tasked with ensuring the proper management of county jails.

We cannot allow the state to roll back the progress it has made since the mid 70's. TCJS must continue to be provided a level of funding equal to – or more than (*see note below*) – what it is presently receiving. Failure to do so will pose a threat to personnel and to crucial functions, including travel for on-site trainings and technical assistance for jail administrators, the timely re-inspection of noncompliant facilities, special inspections of at-risk facilities, and meetings with local leadership to address facility issues.

NOTE: Compared to the budget and responsibilities of other state agencies, TCJS's annual budget of \$1,024,506 (submitted by the agency for FY 2012 and 13 – already 5% less than it was appropriated for FY 10 and 11) is insufficient to meet the growing demands of counties. At the very least, this amount must be maintained, but increased funding would better enable it to fulfill its mission and assist counties in need.

SOLUTIONS TO BUDGET CUTS

Instead of making harmful budgetary cuts to agencies like the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, the Legislature must take advantage of the Rainy Day Fund, which could provide over \$9 billion for the 2012-2013 state budget. Additionally, policy-makers must maximize the use of available federal funding, including any additional stimulus aid or new matching funds made available by health care reform. Finally, the Legislature must create new sources of revenue that are equitable and can grow with the need for public services, including cost-savings through the elimination of unproductive tax breaks.