



Vermont Corrections commissioner testifies in Washington

Vermont's Department of Corrections commissioner testified before the U.S. [Senate](#) Judiciary Committee Wednesday, saying Vermont can serve as a model in helping inmates successfully reintegrate into their communities.

Commissioner Andrew Pallito spoke about the state's inmate mentoring program, Circles of Support and Accountability.

"Increased citizen participation has resulted in diminishing public resistance towards offender re-entry and marginalization of returning offenders. This dramatically improves an offenders potential for success and can achieve a significant reduction in recidivism," Pallito said.

He said between 1990 and 2010 the state's inmate population grew by 160 percent. He attributed a recent slowing in the growth of the inmate population to re-entry programs and community involvement.

"We have begun to change the conversation about returning offenders in local communities from 'How can we keep them out of our town?' to 'How can we make them a part of this community so they won't do harm again and prevent them from entering the corrections system?'" Pallito said in his testimony.

The hearing, chaired by Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., reviewed the progress of grant programs authorized by the Second Chance Act first passed in 2008. The act authorized federal grants for state and [local governments](#) and organizations to provide education, job training, substance abuse and rehabilitation programs for Le'Ann Duran, re-entry project [director](#) of the Justice Center in New York City, who also testified before the panel, called Vermont's approach a good example of creative ways to involve the community in reintegration of inmates.