

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804

COMMITTEES
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
INTELLIGENCE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

March 13, 2018

Mr. Mark S. Inch
Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons
320 First St, NW
Washington, DC 20534

Dear Director Inch:

We write to express our deep concerns about the hazardous working conditions created by staffing shortages at the Federal Correctional Institutions throughout West Virginia. As members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, we have repeatedly supported increased funding for the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to address this issue, yet we remain extremely disappointed in the lack of progress that has been made to date. As a result, we are requesting a detailed description of the additional resources you need in Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 and 2019 to address these dangerous staffing shortages in our home state.

In addition to the over 5,000 positions being eliminated nation-wide, you announced in a February 12, 2018 memorandum to staff that more reductions were likely. While we understand the challenges presented by our current budget constraints, the record is clear. For the past few years, Congress has increased funding for BOP to address these staffing shortage issues across the country.

In FY 2016, the omnibus funding bill appropriated \$6,948,500,000 for the salaries and expenses of the Federal Prison System – a \$133,500,000 increase over FY 2015. In FY 2017, the omnibus funding bill appropriated \$7,008,800,000 for salaries and expenses of the Federal Prison System. As we work to finalize the FY 2018 omnibus appropriations package in the coming weeks, we will continue fighting for additional funding to support the important work you do, but we cannot afford to keep blindly throwing money at the problem. We need an accurate estimate of the additional resources you need to address these staffing shortages in the current fiscal year, and we need that information as soon as possible.

While the total inmate population may be slightly down from 2013 levels, a 2017 report conducted by the Office of the Inspector General found that “The challenge for the Department [of Justice] is managing a federal prison system that over the past 20 years has taken an ever larger share of the Department’s budget, currently accounting for nearly 25% of the Department’s budget, yet remains overcrowded.” Instead of hiring more officers, BOP has reportedly relied on wide-spread augmentation of staff that presents severe, unacceptable safety risks. A recent decision by the Federal Labor Relations Authority found that BOP was augmenting staff at the Bennettsville, South Carolina penitentiary without adequate preparation

thereby increasing the inherent risks to the facility. Maintaining adequate staffing levels would eliminate the need for this dangerous practice.

The health and safety of our correctional officers who put their lives on the line every day is critical to the success of our institutions. Correctional officers deserve to go to work each morning having confidence that they will return safely to their families that evening, and it is our duty to give them the training and support they need to do just that. We look forward to your response and your ongoing attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin, III
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator