On November 22, 2016, Governor Terry Branstad held a budget hearing for the Department of Corrections (DOC). DOC Director Jerry Bartruff presented the Department’s FY 2018 and FY 2019 funding requests, stating that the Department’s budget will remain at status quo at an appropriation level of $385.1 million.

Director Bartruff stressed the importance of lowering the recidivism rate in controlling costs. Apprenticeship programs within the prisons help to reduce recidivism by giving inmates employable job skills upon their release. The DOC is also trying to use resources more efficiently, and the move of sex offenders from the Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility to the Newton Correctional Facility is an example of that effort. Increasing medical and county confinement costs are two areas that were cited by Director Bartruff as concerns. A Lean project addressing county confinement costs was conducted, and changes in the processes for parole violation revocations are being enacted to decrease inefficiencies.

Governor Branstad inquired about the Iowa State Penitentiary (ISP) at Fort Madison. Director Bartruff stated that some of the problems they have experienced with the new facility were anticipated. The geothermal and ventilation issues are still being addressed, as are some operational issues. Critical incidents have decreased in the new facility, and the staff is accepting the direct supervision model. Discussions regarding how to utilize the old ISP facility are ongoing.

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