



Ladies of SCI:

Non-Partisan Advocacy Group for Inmates and Their Loved Ones

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Prison Oversight

- **20 other states** (including all of Wisconsin's neighbors) and the Federal Bureau of Prisons have Ombudsman or oversight offices
- Proposed Wisconsin Ombudsman Office estimated to cost \$1.5 Million per year
 - o Bill Draft 25-0377 available for review
 - o Oversight models have bi-partisan support nationwide
- Wisconsin paid **\$17 Million** in lawsuits over ten years
 - o Five lawsuits pending for deaths at Waupun
 - o New Jersey Ombudsman addresses at least 60% of complaints internally, proactively limiting litigation costs
 - o Ombudsmen typically review ADA issues, family concerns, staff concerns, mistreatment accusations etc. – all subjects media has brought attention to in the last two years
- States with established oversight show safer facility conditions over time
- **Potential Savings:** Illinois Ombudsman office in 2018 estimated it saved the state \$178,436.95 solely through reviewing application of good time credits. This accounted for roughly 2% of complaints the Bureau handled.

Prison Population

- As of February 2026, at almost highest number of prisoners ever – **23,423**
 - o Population has increased 21% since 2021
 - o Facility capacity is only rated at 17,663 = **32% over capacity**
 - o Facilities such as Green Bay and Taycheedah are double bunking even though designed to be single bunk cells
 - o Facilities like New Lisbon and Taycheedah have converted classrooms to dormitories, removing space for programming
- Overcrowding exacerbates staffing issues
 - o Vacancy rate is 13.6% as of March 7, 2026
 - o Lowest vacancy rate after pay increase in 2023 was 11.3%
 - o DOC hired 2,135 people in fiscal year 24
 - **617 employees left voluntarily**
 - 163 employees were removed from employment
 - 216 employees retired

Sources: Prisonoversight.org, Wisconsin Department of Corrections Interactive Dashboards, and State of Wisconsin Classified Workforce & Affirmative Action Report; Fiscal Year 2023 and 2204



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- 2,116 DOC employees will be eligible for retirement within the next five years