



MEDIA RELEASE

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Facilities**

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**MINNCOR Prison
Industries**

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**Minnesota Department of Corrections Clarifies Pew Survey
Statistics on Recidivism**
Commissioner calls survey misleading, will ask for correction

St. Paul - A national survey of recidivism rates among offenders is painting an inaccurate picture of Minnesota's corrections system. The Pew Center on the States today released a report called "State of Recidivism, the Revolving Door of America's Prisons." Pew claimed that Minnesota has the highest numbers of offenders returning to prison.

"The Pew study deals with an important issue facing our nation," said Minnesota Commissioner of Corrections Tom Roy, "Unfortunately, their figures for Minnesota are wrong and we are going to ask them for a correction."

The Pew survey double-counts offenders who are sent back to prison because they did not follow the rules that are required as conditions of their supervised release. Minnesota has a determinate sentencing system, meaning that prisoners are not released on parole or given time-off for good behavior. Instead, they serve two-thirds of their sentence behind bars and the remaining third on supervised release. Any violation of the conditions of that release can land the offender back in prison.

"Combining technical violations like use of alcohol with statistics on new crimes is inherently misleading," said Roy. "In reality, nearly three-quarters of the offenders released from our custody do not commit new felonies that land them back in prison in a three-year period."

The most recent figures available are from the three-year period that ended in 2007:

- Return to prison for a new felony conviction – 23.4% (6% decrease from 2004)
- Return to prison for a violation of supervised release – 35.7% (5% decrease from 2004)
- Return to prison for any reason – 48.7% (5% decrease from 2004)

Roy also points out that the make-up of offenders that serve time in Minnesota's prisons is different from many other states. Minnesota has the second-lowest incarceration rate in the nation with only 9,429 offenders serving time in prison. By comparison, Wisconsin incarcerates 23,749 offenders. By locking up high-risk offenders and using community-based alternatives like probation, restitution and at-home electronic monitoring for lower-risk offenders, the state keeps corrections costs for taxpayers low.

"When you're sent to prison in Minnesota, you've earned your place there," said Roy. "That population of offenders is simply at greater risk of reoffending after release. That's why we supervise them closely and reincarcerate if they are going to pose a threat to the community."

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