

2017 International Legislators Forum

Biography

Tom Roy, Commissioner

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Commissioner Tom Roy has provided leadership and vision for the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) since his appointment by Governor Mark Dayton in 2011 and 2015.

Throughout his over 42 years in the field of corrections, Roy has distinguished himself by developing and ushering in innovative programming, and best practices that focus on reducing recidivism. In 2016, he was the recipient of Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA)'s Michael Francke Award as Outstanding Director of Corrections.

Tom Roy's correctional career spans over 40 years, from his early days as a pre-trial officer to becoming the director of Arrowhead Regional Corrections in Northern Minnesota before being appointed as commissioner of the DOC. Under his guidance, the DOC has a professional workforce of just over 4,200 employees, and a biennial budget of over a billion dollars. He is tasked with the safety and security, operations and programming of 10 correctional facilities with 10,000 incarcerated offenders and the supervision of 20,000 offenders in the community.

Commissioner Roy led the state's criminal justice organizations and the legislature by participating on the Minnesota Legislature's Prison Population Task Force, which reviewed solutions to reduce recidivism, lower population and improve programming, reforming the department's revocation and hearing process, and empowering community corrections agencies to work with men and women to divert them from coming to prison. He was also a strong advocate for drug sentencing reform that will lower the department's population by over 500 within the next five years; and he was instrumental when in 2015, the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission (MSGC) voted to change drug sentencing by adopting new sentencing guidelines for drug offenses and recommending other changes to drug laws.

Under the Commissioner's leadership, the Minnesota Statewide Initiative to Reduce Recidivism (MNSIRR) was launched. It is a collaboration spanning state and county systems, community

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service providers, and other stakeholders. The MNSIRR focus is on those offenders most likely to reoffend, identifying and targeting areas where crime and recidivism rates are highest and utilizing programs proven to work, and ensuring services are well-delivered; and under Roy's leadership has been awarded a one-million-dollar grant for implementation.

The DOC, under the Commissioner's guidance, has implemented Transition from Prison to Community (TPC), which strongly supports the department's mission to reduce recidivism by promoting offender change through proven strategies during safe and secure incarceration and effective community supervision.

Roy is also a member on the Governor's Task Force on Mental Health. Under his leadership, Minnesota was the first corrections system to adopt the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) system wide. The CIT strengthens correctional officer's abilities to recognize symptoms of mental illness, de-escalate and often prevent mental health crises, and connect those incarcerated to supportive resources.

Through Commissioner Roy's proactive, effective and progressive leadership, Minnesota maintains a strong and effective correctional system.

Tom Roy is a graduate of the University of Minnesota where he received a B.A. in Political Science.