

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

EXHIBIT 8
DATE Jan. 13, 2005
NO. 2



BRIAN SCHWEITZER, GOVERNOR

1539 11TH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

(406) 444-3930
FAX (406) 444-4920

PO BOX 201301
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1301

Mr. Chairman, Senators, Representatives, and Legislative Staff... Good Morning.

My name is Monty Le Texier and I have been serving the citizens of Butte and Montana for five years as a Montana State Probation and Parole Officer as well as serving the citizens of Jefferson County as a Reserve Deputy for the past nine years. I started in December of 1999 in a Modified position that was created in an attempt to reduce caseloads of current probation/parole officers. Case Management was implemented to increase public safety and to more adequately address the risk an offender presented to our communities. It also addressed what needs an offender needed from our communities to succeed and decrease the threat he or she poses to the public. Probation/Parole Officers began conducting more house and employment checks. We increased communication with collateral contacts such as mental health and chemical dependency counselors. We spoke more frequently with family members and neighbors. We meet the offender in their environment instead of ours.

A little more about my background...

I am a graduate of Montana Tech, of the University of Montana, and had completed my degree while working full time as a Probation/Parole Officer, being a daddy of four boys, and volunteering, at that time, as the Lieutenant of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Reserves. While in school, my time was stretched extremely thin for all said, "projects." My boys were in sports, demanding daddy time, my schoolwork was difficult for this "older than average" student, and my job was physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing. In 2001, I was never so happy to be called a graduate. I thought I had slipped into the easy seat with one of my most time consuming projects complete. That wasn't the case...it seems the other facets of my life felt the void, and quickly filled it in. As I grew to understand my job with the Department of Corrections more fully, it engulfed me and demanded more and more of my time. Today find myself thinking about "this" Pre-sentence Investigation or "that" Report of Violation, while off duty. I further find myself sometimes skipping "mandatory" breaks and cutting lunches to nothing, if I can get away with it, just to try and keep up with the increasing demands for public safety.

I can look at my 100 plus cases of convicted adult offenders and honestly say 90% of their crimes are related to illegal drugs and predominantly but not exclusively by any means, methamphetamine. Officer safety is on all officer's minds and our heightened awareness of community, officer, and offender safety is in jeopardy! We supervise each felon as an individual, meaning each has special needs such as mental health, chemical dependency, anger management, and or criminal thinking errors, and the list goes on. An

evening "out on the town" looking for offenders creates days of office work; meaning officers are not able to return to the community.

I'd like to provide a few examples of some of my experiences while working in the Butte office.

A month ago Probation/Parole Officer Erik Carlson and I were looking for one of his absconded offenders. We found him that evening along with another offender. Each had been using drugs and drinking. When it came time to search their vehicle, a riot shotgun was found...loaded. The offender who claimed the shotgun later told Officer Carlson that the weapon was for his protection from a drug dealer who had threatened him over a drug deal gone bad.

Another example that comes to mind happened a few months ago. Three Probation Officers and I were conducting home visits as required per policy, and also bar checks, looking for offenders. We came upon one of my violent offenders in a bar who had absconded supervision. Before we could get to him, a male we did not know approached us with a pool stick and threatened us with it. The diversion worked and because of the unknown males actions, the offender disappear. We attempted to conduct a search of the bar, when the bartender asked us for our credentials. They were presented; she dismissed them, grabbed me by my arm, and told us to get out. By this time, the bar crowd was chanting riot and our safety was in jeopardy. We backed out of the situation, called law enforcement and re-entered when they arrived. The bar was searched, the violent offender got away and the bartender and the male with the pool cue went to jail for obstructing justice. I do not believe there is such a thing as a typical day at the office for probation officers, and see violence increasing.

Probation/Parole Officer's must respond IMMEDIATELY to any situation caused by an offender that poses a threat to society. When Mrs. Johnson calls to tell me that the man who beat up her 72-year-old mother two years ago is back drinking and laughing at his actions, we MUST respond NOW. This incident happened yesterday. The lady that called said she is afraid to have her children in her home because she believes my offender may come into her residence again. The general public has an expectation of safety, and I responded to ensure this.

These stories are a mere fraction of the events that we as probation/parole officers encounter. My intention with these stories is to show the members of this committee that Community Corrections must have the fourteen new probation/parole officer's positions as well as the five, half time, administrative support positions. What this committee is doing by agreeing to support the increase of staff in Corrections is to allow current and future officer's to be more proactive rather that reactive, to ensure community safety and offender accountability. It allows officer's to meet the offender in their environment and demand their compliance. With more officers and more administrative support, it lowers caseloads, and takes away clerical duties we currently perform.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monty Le Texier". The signature is written in a cursive style with some overlapping strokes.

Monty Le Texier
State Probation/Parole Officer