

**By** Senator Rodriguez

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30 date.

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32 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:33  
34 Section 1. Section 11.92, Florida Statutes, is created to  
35 read:36 11.92 Office of the Corrections Ombudsman.—37 (1) The Legislature finds that the protection of the  
38 health, safety, welfare, and rights of persons who are  
39 incarcerated within the state correctional system is a matter of  
40 urgent public concern. Current law does not provide adequate and  
41 independent oversight of the Department of Corrections to ensure  
42 accountability, monitor conditions of confinement, and  
43 investigate complaints. It is appropriate and necessary to  
44 create an independent entity as a unit of the legislative branch  
45 of state government in order to restore public trust in the  
46 department.47 (2) As used in this section, the term:48 (a) "Committee" means the Corrections Oversight Committee.49 (b) "Correctional facility" means a state correctional  
50 institution or contractor-operated correctional facility.51 (c) "Department" means the Department of Corrections.52 (d) "Office" means the Office of the Corrections Ombudsman.53 (e) "Ombudsman" means the Corrections Ombudsman.54 (3) The Office of the Corrections Ombudsman is created as a  
55 unit of the legislative branch of state government. The office  
56 is independent of the Department of Corrections and reports  
57 directly to the Legislature. The office shall be headed by the  
58 Corrections Ombudsman. The office may hire staff and use

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59 volunteers as necessary to perform its duties. The office shall  
60 do all of the following:

61 (a) Receive, track, investigate, and attempt to resolve  
62 complaints concerning correctional facilities made by or on  
63 behalf of incarcerated persons, supporters of incarcerated  
64 persons, and the public.

65 (b) Monitor and evaluate the conditions of confinement and  
66 the treatment of incarcerated persons in correctional  
67 facilities. The office may inspect such facilities at any time,  
68 but must inspect each facility at least once each year.

69 (c) Collect and analyze data relating to serious incidents,  
70 violence, and deaths that occur in correctional facilities.

71 (d) Make recommendations to the department and Legislature  
72 which identify solutions to systemic problems, as well as policy  
73 changes and corrective actions necessary to protect the health,  
74 safety, welfare, and rights of incarcerated persons.

75 (e) Provide information, as appropriate, to incarcerated  
76 persons, supporters of incarcerated persons, and the public  
77 about the rights of incarcerated persons and the services of the  
78 office.

79 (4) The Legislature shall appoint the Ombudsman to a 5-year  
80 term by a majority vote and may only remove the Ombudsman by a  
81 majority vote. The Ombudsman may be reappointed for a 5-year  
82 term. The Ombudsman:

83 (a) Must have knowledge and experience in corrections and  
84 human rights.

85 (b) May not have worked for the department in the 10 years  
86 preceding his or her appointment.

87 (c) May not have a family member who has worked for the

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88 department in the 10 years preceding his or her appointment.

89 (5) (a) On or before January 1, 2027, the Legislature shall  
90 establish a Corrections Oversight Committee composed of 15  
91 voting members. The committee shall meet quarterly to advise,  
92 assist, and provide guidance to the Ombudsman; however, the  
93 Ombudsman is not required to accept such advice, assistance, or  
94 guidance.

95 (b) Four members of the Legislature shall be appointed to  
96 the committee. The Senate Committee on Rules shall appoint two  
97 members of the Senate who are not members of the same political  
98 party, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall  
99 appoint two members of the House of Representatives who are not  
100 members of the same political party.

101 (c) The legislative members appointed pursuant to paragraph  
102 (b) shall appoint the remaining 11 members of the committee and  
103 must include at least one:

104 1. Licensed physician.

105 2. Licensed mental or behavioral health professional.

106 3. Educator.

107 4. Member of the clergy.

108 5. Former administrative employee of the department.

109 6. Man who is a citizen of the United States and was  
110 formerly incarcerated in a correctional facility for a term of  
111 imprisonment of 3 or more years within the 10 years preceding  
112 his appointment.

113 7. Woman who is a citizen of the United States and was  
114 formerly incarcerated in a correctional facility for a term of  
115 imprisonment of 3 or more years within the 10 years preceding  
116 her appointment.

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117       8. Family member of a person who is incarcerated in a  
118       correctional facility at the time of the family member's  
119       appointment.

120       9. Representative of a nonprofit prisoner advocacy group.

121       10. Person with a background in data analysis.

122       11. Person with experience in inmate reentry services.

123       (d) Each committee member shall be appointed to a 3-year  
124       term. However, for the purpose of achieving staggered terms, the  
125       members initially appointed under subparagraphs (c)6.-11. shall  
126       each serve a 2-year term. All subsequent appointments shall be  
127       for 3-year terms. Any vacancy must be filled in the same manner  
128       as the original appointment for the remainder of the unexpired  
129       term.

130       (6) The department shall provide the Ombudsman and  
131       committee members with immediate access to correctional  
132       facilities, staff members of such facilities, persons  
133       incarcerated in such facilities, and records of such facilities  
134       which the Ombudsman or committee members determine are needed to  
135       carry out the duties of the office. The Ombudsman and committee  
136       members may access any correctional facility at any time,  
137       unannounced, and speak confidentially with any incarcerated  
138       person or staff member.

139       (7) Written correspondence between an incarcerated person  
140       and the office, including the Ombudsman or a committee member,  
141       is privileged mail under rule 33-210.103, Florida Administrative  
142       Code.

143       (8) The decision, or failure, to file a complaint with the  
144       office does not impact the inmate grievance procedure  
145       established under s. 944.331.

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146        (9) The office is not required to investigate every  
147 complaint or process complaints in the order received.

148        (10) Beginning December 1, 2027, the office shall submit an  
149 annual report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of  
150 the House of Representatives which summarizes the activities,  
151 findings, and recommendations of the office.

152        Section 2. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of  
153 \$250,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the General  
154 Revenue Fund to the Office of the Corrections Ombudsman for the  
155 purposes of implementing and administering this act.

156        Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.