



## DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

BRIAN SCHWEITZER, GOVERNOR

5 SOUTH LAST CHANCE GULCH

STATE OF MONTANA

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

PO BOX 201301  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1301

June 20, 2012

Sen. Jim Shockley  
Chairman  
Law and Justice Interim Committee  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Sen. Shockley,

I am unable to attend the June 21-22 meeting of the Law and Justice Interim Committee because of personal business out of state. However, I do want to provide you with my thoughts concerning the Corrections Advisory Council, which is on the agenda for the first day of the meeting.

The Schweitzer administration made a decision in 2010 to eliminate the council as part of a budget-cutting effort. The decision was not a reflection of the value of the council to the Department of Corrections, but rather a recognition that reductions had to be made where they would have the least impact on programs and services needed to ensure the continued safety of Montanans.

I believe the Corrections Advisory Council should not be statutorily required, but its creation should remain an option for the governor. The decision on whether an executive branch agency needs advice from a citizens group belongs with the chief executive of that branch of government, just as the decision on creation of select legislative committees is left to the discretion of the legislative leadership.

If the committee decides to proceed with legislation that would statutorily mandate a Corrections Advisory Council, it should ensure the legislation spells out the qualifications, selection process, and length of appointment for the members. It also should provide sufficient funding to adequately and effectively operate the council on a biennial basis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Ferriter".

Mike Ferriter  
Director