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PRESS RELEASE

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MDOC Task Force Holds Second Public Hearing Friday

JACKSON - A task force overseeing a review of Mississippi Department of Corrections' contracts will hold its second public hearing Friday at the Woolfolk State Office Building in Jackson.

The first hearing March 7 at Delta State University drew about 45 people, including elected officials, families of inmates, vendors, current and former MDOC employees and prison officials. More than a dozen people spoke.

Task force co-chairmen Andy Taggart and Robert Gibbs said they were pleased with the turnout and hope the upcoming meeting is well attended, too.

"Some of the issues we heard we were familiar with, such as the high cost of inmate telephone calls and commissary items, and some we were not, such as family members' visitation concerns," said Taggart, an attorney and former chief of staff for Gov. Kirk Fordice.

Friday's meeting, from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. in Room 145 of the Woolfolk Building, 501 N. West St., will take the place of the task force's regularly scheduled meeting.

Task force members are holding the hearings to learn firsthand of real-life experiences in dealing with the MDOC, especially regarding contracting with the agency. Gov. Phil Bryant created the task force in November following the indictment of former Corrections Commissioner Christopher B. Epps and businessman Cecil McCrory on corruption charges related to prison contracts. Both pleaded guilty to related charges in February and are awaiting sentencing in June.

"While we are specifically charged with reviewing contracts, we are listening to all concerns," said Gibbs, an attorney and former Hinds County Circuit judge.

The other members of the task force are:

- Mike Moore, an attorney and a former state attorney general;
- Constance Slaughter-Harvey, an attorney, a former assistant secretary of state and president of the Legacy Foundation; and
- Bill Crawford: president of The Montgomery Institute and a former state lawmaker.

Written comments also can be sent to taskforce@dfa.ms.gov or Andy Taggart, MDOC Task Force Co-Chairman, 1022 Highland Colony Parkway, Suite 101, Ridgeland, MS 39157.

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