

**Opening Remarks**  
**Senator Janet Howell**  
**Public Safety Subcommittee**  
**Thursday, September 8, 2011**

The meeting of the Public Safety Subcommittee will come to order.

I want to begin by thanking Sheriff Mike Wade for hosting our meeting this morning.

Sheriff Wade is a leader in Virginia and nationally in developing effective jail-based programs for substance abuse and mental health counseling, and as a result, the Henrico County Jail (both this facility and the eastern facility in New Kent County) is well known as a model for effective programming.

**If we could take just a moment to introduce the members of the Public Safety Subcommittee ....**

**We are also delighted to have with us Delegates John O'Bannon and Jimmie Massey ...**

We're especially pleased today to be visiting Henrico County, Senator Stosch's home, and we recognize this is a very well-managed local government with a strong tax base and outstanding public services.

The management team here includes some of the most experienced local government executives in the nation, including Deputy County Manager George Drumwright, who is well known for his expertise in both the human services and the criminal justice fields.

And of course, our own commissioner Jim Stewart is a former director of the Henrico County Community Services Board.

With this level of expertise, there was no question that we wanted to visit the Henrico County Jail to follow up on our discussions of jail mental health issues.

Our agenda this morning is focused on the large numbers of the mentally ill housed in our jails, due to lack of the resources for diversion to more appropriate treatment programs.

In 2005, we initiated what is now the annual survey by the Compensation Board (with the assistance of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services) to determine the actual numbers of mentally ill offenders in jail.

Virginia is, to the best of our knowledge, the only state to survey 100 percent of its jails on this topic.

From last year's survey, we know that 15.7 percent of the male population and 42.0 percent of the female population in jail were known or suspected to be mentally ill – representing a total of 4,867 inmates.

Of these, over 53 percent (5,590 inmates) had a serious mental illness, and this number represented ten percent of the total jail population.

I have no doubt that we all understand this represents far more of the mentally ill in our jails than in our state mental hospitals.

And, collectively, the jails reported that 973 additional beds were needed to house inmates in mental health units.

This survey has been tremendously helpful to us in defining the scope of the problem, but we must do more.

That's why we want to hear from leaders in local government who have first-hand experience. We look forward to your helping us think about the kinds of solutions that will be needed over the next several years.

And with that, I would like to turn first to Sheriff Mike Wade.