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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

No. 08-072

January 29, 2008

Departments of Corrections and Labor unite to launch Apprenticeship and Employment Transition Program

(JUNEAU) – The Commissioners of the Departments of Corrections (DOC) and Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) have approved a joint effort to bring a new apprenticeship and job training program to qualified Alaska prison inmates. The goal is to offer inmates an opportunity to learn a trade and, upon release, transition directly into living wage employment.

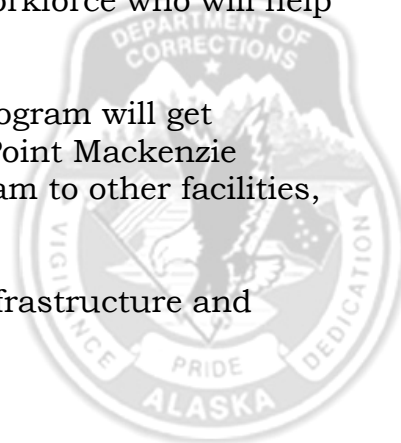
“This partnership will bring an opportunity for prison inmates that they never had before,” said Labor Commissioner Click Bishop . “This is a chance for inmates to develop a skilled occupation which they can use for the rest of their lives, so they can contribute positively to society.”

Key to the program will be providing opportunities for formal certification in a skilled occupation and direct cooperation with partners such as trade unions, contractor associations and private sector employers. The program is set to begin July 1.

“Holding a meaningful job is a major factor that determines whether or not someone successfully moves from prison to society. Our recidivism rate is 66 percent; that’s too high. I have a lot of hope that this program will help lower that rate,” said Corrections Commissioner Joe Schmidt. “Instead of releasing offenders whose statistics show will likely commit new crimes, we’d like to release a member of the workforce who will help build up the society they once damaged.”

The Apprenticeship and Employment Transition Program will get underway first at Palmer Correctional Center and Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm. The goal is to expand the program to other facilities, the Commissioner said.

These facilities were selected because of existing infrastructure and proximity of employment opportunities.



Apprenticeship programs will be offered in the fields of building maintenance and repair, electrician, plumber and carpentry.

Job training programs are presently offered at the state's correctional facilities. The new program will build on that foundation by linking with private sector employers, contractor associations, labor unions and Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees. This coordination will be directed by a liaison. In addition, the program will aim for industry-recognized certifications.

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