

# Attorney general urges overhaul of justice system

By KARI BARLOW  
Staff Writer

The North Carolina justice system should undergo major changes because of pressing problems, including prison overcrowding, state Attorney General Lacy Thornburg said in an address to the House Corrections Committee Tuesday.

Thornburg wants the General Assembly to study all aspects of the prison situation in North Carolina

instead of focusing on just one issue, said Lucien Capone, special deputy attorney general.

Another problem is the shortage of staff in the justice system, he said. "Because of the increase of caseloads, the state needs to add more staff to the district attorney's office and add superior court judges," he said.

In 1987 North Carolina enacted a cap law to reduce the numbers of inmates in the state. Under this law,

the state inmate population cannot exceed 18,000. When the population hits 17,640 for 15 days, the parole commission has 90 days to reduce the population to 17,460, Capone said.

Population is reduced by increasing the number of prisoners eligible for parole so prisoners have a better chance of being paroled during this emergency period than under usual circumstances, he said.

Since January of this year, emer-

gency conditions have gone into effect five times, Capone said.

Due to overcrowding, "the integrity of the sentencing structure had to suffer," he said.

"The basic problem is that under the current sentencing structure judges can no longer predict how long a defendant will spend in prison."

Rep. John Hurley, D-Cumberland, said the uncertainty of the sentence length was out of a judge's hands.

"The key theory is the parole system we have," Hurley said. "It plays a major factor."

Rep. Billy Watkins, D-Granville, said he saw no problem with the uncertainty of a defendant's sentence.

"I don't see there's a big problem," Watkins said. "You want the man corrected."

But Capone said the crowding problem forces the state to release inmates before they can be

rehabilitated.

Rep. Doris Huffman, R-Catawba, a member of the corrections committee, said the public should be more aware of the state's sentencing procedures.

"I think the public is unaware of how much gain time can be earned. There either needs to be an education of the public or a change so that the public understands what a sentence received means," Huffman said.

Watkins said the state should consider alternatives to incarceration. "We are sorely underbuilt on prisons. But we should explore all alternatives to prisons," he said.

"We need to have some satellite facilities where your DWIs and things of that nature could work in the day and spend the night in the facility — work release," he said.

Hurley agreed the state should continue its alternatives to incarceration, but he said more prisons must also be built.

"It's a very civilized thing to do to give the inmates adequate space to live," Hurley said.

## New billing options meet with student approval

By TOM PARKS  
Staff Writer

Students are in favor of having new billing options for long-distance calls made to Triangle cities, but some wonder why these cities were subject to long-distance charges in the first place.

Beginning March 31, students whose local phone service is provided by Southern Bell will be able to use one of four billing options for calls made to cities in the Triangle.

Students will be notified of the

change by mail in late February.

Residence Hall Association President Jimmy Randolph said the change might help area businesses that make regular calls to Triangle cities more than it would help students or other users.

But he said, "Any kind of change that will increase our options is favorable."

Students who use GTE South, which provides service for Durham and Creedmoor, will be able to call Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Hillsborough

and Cary at rates 60-70 percent less than present rates, depending on the time of day of the call and which city is being called.

GTE users will not have to pay a surcharge for the service, Steve Toler of GTE said the lower rates will generate a higher volume of calls.

Residential Southern Bell users in Chapel Hill will be able to opt for one of three new billing options or no change, calling Triangle cities at long-distance rates.

For a monthly cost of \$3, Southern

Bell will cut long-distance rates to Durham, Raleigh, Cary, Hillsborough and the parts of Orange County served by Mebane Home Phone by half. For \$4.50 monthly, long-distance calls of any duration to the same cities will cost 25 cents.

For a monthly charge of \$10 to \$20, toll-free calling is available to some or all of the same cities. A similar option for calls to Durham is available now.

These new options are part of an 18-month trial by the N.C. Utilities Commission. At the end of 18 months the commission will decide whether to end or continue, and possibly alter, the new services.

Three of the five phone companies that provide service in the Triangle

area will be introducing similar services.

Student body president aide Joe Andronaco said, "Anything that benefits students with regard to rates is helpful."

Students make a good number of calls to Durham, Raleigh and other Triangle cities, whether to talk to family in the area or to make reservations at Raleigh-Durham International Airport or a restaurant, Andronaco said.

But he said he did not understand why some places very close to Chapel Hill are long-distance.

"I know people who don't live too far past the Europa Hotel and are handicapped by the fact that it is long-distance," he said.

## Transportation board presents report

By CHARLES BRITAIN  
Staff Writer

A plan by the Carrboro Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) to improve road conditions and traffic circulation in the downtown area has been presented to the Carrboro Board of Aldermen.

TAB chairman Kenneth Gibson said the plan includes transforming two blocks of Main and Weaver streets into a one-way pair.

"It is obvious for people driving through Carrboro that the existing facilities do not meet the area's needs," he said.

The advisory board's purpose is to give suggestions to the board of aldermen about possible improve-

ments in Carrboro traffic conditions, Gibson said.

"We were assigned with coming up with a long-range plan for solving the traffic problem which would fit the character of Carrboro," he said.

Transportation planner Jim Dunlop said, "The plan means better roads and better traffic circulation."

If the plan is approved by the board of aldermen, it will lead to changes in existing roads and construction of new roads to ease the burden in the downtown area during rush hour, he said.

The conversion of Main and Weaver streets to one-way will increase the traffic capacity of the area by 50-75 percent, Dunlop said.

Gibson said the advisory board and the town will sponsor an open meeting for citizens interested in more details about the plan and how it will affect the community.

The board of aldermen will then hold a public hearing to receive citizens' concerns with the project, Gibson said.

For approximately two years, TAB has worked on the traffic circulation plan as an alternative to a plan proposed by the N.C. Department of Transportation, he said.

"What we created was a balanced plan that tries to meet the needs of the town and citizens and at the same time present the proper image of Carrboro," Gibson said.

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