

To the members of the Review Panel on Prison Rape, Welcome.

I am Jim Branch Jr., Sheriff of Culpeper County, and on behalf of our citizens, the deputies of the sheriff's office, and myself, welcome to Culpeper.

It is our hope that your day will be well spent in our community, and certainly we hope you can return to enjoy its beauty and people.

I must confess that before the interaction involving interviewing of our inmates on the concerns of sexual assaults or rape, and further contact to discuss public hearings regarding this matter, I was not fully aware of the Prison Rape Elimination Act.

Obviously, we are pleased that our efforts combined with other factors in the mix, resulted in our jail having no reported incidents of sexual assault or rape for the year 2007. Your reason for being here today.

While I suspect our office cannot take full credit for this or the many factors entering into, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize our deputies in our jail facility. Whose hard work, dedication, and willingness to reach for a bar set high, have helped to bring about this accomplishment.

The Culpeper County Sheriff's Office has been serving the citizens of Culpeper County since 1751. I would be remiss if I did not recognize the history of and the people of the Culpeper County Sheriff's Office whose past efforts, deputy and Sheriff alike, have helped shape us as we are today.

The office provides civil process service, criminal process service, criminal investigations, court security, prisoner transport, and of course maintains a county jail. Our office consists of about 114 persons. About 87 sworn officers with 28, including supervision, responsible for the jail.

The Culpeper County Jail was built, or I should say , expanded about 22 years ago and its rated capacity is 37 inmates. Double bunking in June of 2008 bought bed space to 74.

The average daily population in house is 87. Inmates housed out 35. We have contracted bed space at the Middle River Regional Jail and typically house six to eight inmates with Rappahannock County. Presently Culpeper County has responsibility for potentially 122 inmates. The increase of inmates seems to rise at about 7% per year giving a five year potential increase of 35% inmate population. Inmate comital and releases for 2007 were as follows. Committals 2,766. Releases 2771.

As expected our deputies are quite busy, with much expected of them. Of course we have been grappling with the issue of the need for a new facility to meet current and future needs for space and security. With the current economic downturn, a new facility is not expected anytime soon.

I would also express to you that the current structure of the Sheriff's Office has changed since 2007, for different reasons, and while I have been part of the office for some time, I did not take office as Sheriff until January of 2008.

As I have become more familiar with the Prison Rape Elimination Act, its work, goals and vision, I recognize it as a worthy endeavor.

I believe I speak not only for myself, but our community and deputies of our office when I wish you every success in the work you are engaged in.

Today's hearing is new territory for our office and its officers, and I hope this is a positive learning experience for all. It is our hope that our efforts today will help further your work as you go forward in the mission you are engaged in. Thank you.