

Petition statement to be delivered to **Secretary Edward Wall, Secretary of the WI Department of Corrections(DOC), Kathleen Nagle, Parole Commissioner, WI state legislature and Governor Scott Walker:**

Citizens call for PAROLE RULE CHANGES to give old Law prisoners a real second chance

Petition by Forum for Understanding Prisons (FFUP)

NEW RULES NEEDED TO GOVERN PAROLE RELEASE FOR "OLD LAW PRISONERS", PRISONERS CONVICTED OF CRIMES COMMITTED PRIOR TO DECEMBER 31, 1999

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Over 2000 prisoners in Wisconsin, who were convicted of crimes committed before 2000 when Truth-In-Sentencing (TIS) was enacted, are currently eligible for parole. Although many have completed required programming in its entirety or to the best of their ability, they are languishing in prison year after year at an unnecessary cost to the taxpayer of over 170 million dollars annually. Known as "Old Law Prisoners," these inmates are kept in prison not by laws but by unwritten and contradictory rules put forth in 1994 by Governor Tommy Thompson so that Wisconsin could receive 21 billion dollars in federal funds. This money was used to build new prisons and implement TIS, among other things. Consequently, Wisconsin's prison population rose from 7,000 to 22,000 within a decade. True parole consideration was lost in efforts to hold on to a "tough on crime" policy.

Before Truth in Sentences, old law prisoners were often given lengthy sentences because judges knew that the convicted would be paroled after serving 25% if his/her behavior was positive. Now, without parole, many of these souls are being forced to serve the entirety of an this extended sentence. Most are rehabilitated and ready to be good citizens. Many have families waiting for them. We are outraged at the waste of lives, money and resources by the present "no parole" policy. We demand that the unwritten contradictory rules be replaced with clear and concise rules so that those prisoners who have been rehabilitated are released. We want our loved ones home. Prisons have become a job program and that is wrong in every way.

We sign this petition in support of the present effort to use statute 227 to petition the Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary Edward Wall to change the Parole rules (PAC 106) . We also support all honest efforts to fix our broken parole system.

Summation of RULE CHANGE PROPOSALS for WISCONSIN'S PAROLE ELIGIBLE INMATES

1) For inmates sentenced for crimes committed prior to December 31st, 1999, the mandated 25% of their sentence shall be considered sufficient time for punishment. Afterwards, release on

parole shall be granted, absent substantive extenuating circumstances, based on conduct and accomplishments while incarcerated.

2) If parole is not granted, the Parole Board must state in written detail the specific requirements an eligible inmate must meet to be granted parole. This cannot contain a catch-all provision that might allow the decision-maker to base his or her decision on a factor of which the inmate has no control such as "insufficient time for punishment" or "seriousness of the crime". Also, availability of programs and prison overcrowding cannot be a factor. A prisoner can be paroled from any prison and working outside the prison before release, although laudable, is not a prerequisite for release.

3) The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision shall provide parole eligible inmates access to the programs/facilities necessary to complete the requirements for their parole release within 90 days of denial of parole for reasons of programming.

4) The Parole Board shall have the widest possible view of the prisoner. In addition to allowing victims and victim advocates to testify at the hearing, prisoners shall be able to invite family members and advocates. Also, the prisoners shall be allowed to submit letters of recommendation by WIDOC staff and WIDOC volunteers who have worked with him/her. Staff and community members who are against the release shall be allowed to speak.

5) The decision whether to release an inmate shall be made based on testimony at the hearing and documents in the prisoner's file only and the prisoner shall be able to view and contest contents of his/her file beforehand.

Petition Background

I have been advocating for prisoners and their families for over 15 years and know first hand that most of these old law prisoners are rehabilitated and that they are still incarcerated because we have let Prisons become a jobs program. These man and women are desperately needed back with their families. Health care for the aging old law prisoner is breaking both the DOC and the state budget as prisoners get no social security or medicare and even with all the money spent the prisons have no way to treat the elderly humanely . WISCONSINITES!- Look to your old law prisoners!
