

November 28, 2018

Governor-elect Tony Evers
P.O. Box 1879
Madison, WI 53701

RE: Wisconsin Parole Commission

Dear Governor-elect Evers:

Congratulations on your electoral victory. I recently obtained your address and would like to give you input regarding the Wisconsin Parole Commission.

As you may be aware, part of the problem with prison overcrowding is the refusal of the current governor to permit the parole commission to release many of the old prisoners who have been locked up for decades. I have been in prison over 34 years for stabbing a man in a fight. I turn 65 in January and have no chance of release on parole by the current chairman. This is in spite of the fact that I spent 9 years in minimum security and community custody including 19 months of work release and driving a state van unescorted over 30,000 miles throughout northwestern Wisconsin taking prisoners to and from their work release sites.

If you have not already chosen a new chairman, I would like to recommend Rev. Jerry Hancock. He worked for decades as an assistant attorney general before he changed direction and became involved in the Restorative Justice movement. He is currently part of WISDOM, the group seeking reformation of the criminal justice system. He has knowledge, experience and good judgment and would make an excellent chairman.

The first thing your appointee should do is replace the current parole commissioners with people who are not affiliated with the DOC. There is massive group think within the DOC which makes it impossible for any DOC administrator to abandon or look beyond Scott Walker's "lock 'em up and throw away the key" mentality.

I would also like to suggest that you instruct your appointee to change the administrative rules governing paroling criteria. The current rules are entirely subjective. Release can be (and often is) denied without any rational factual basis to support the decision. I have been eligible for release on parole for almost 23 years and have been denied based solely on my current offense and prior criminal record.

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I suggest that you adopt the same criteria which is currently used to decide when to release people from mental institutions who have been found not guilty by reason of mental disease of defect even though they were guilty of the underlying crime.

Sec. 971.17(4), Wis. Stats., provides safeguards to prevent dangerous people from being released from mental institutions and the same standard would work very well for deciding when to release prisoners.

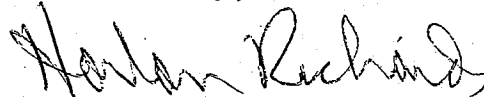
Every 6 months a committed person may petition for release which "[t]he court shall grant unless it finds by clear and convincing evidence that the person would pose a significant risk of bodily harm to himself or herself or to others or of serious property damage if conditionally released." The parole commission could apply this standard to safely release the thousands of prisoners still held under the old laws.

There is a huge difference between a person who committed a violent crime decades ago and a currently dangerous criminal. The current policy of a revolving door for young prisoners who are statistically most likely to reoffend while warehousing all the old prisoners who are least likely to reoffend makes our state less safe. We need sane and rational fact-based paroling policies.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Good luck in your new job. Your upcoming administration will be a breath of fresh air blowing through the fetid miasma of the Wisconsin correctional system.

Sincerely,



Harlan Richards
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100 Corrections Dr.
Stanley, WI 54768

cc: David Liners, WISDOM
Peg Swan, FFUP