



## Letters to the Editor

### Early Release Date

Dear Editor;

My name is Aaron Borrero. In 1997 I was convicted of first degree attempted murder, first degree kidnapping, and a gun enhancement. I was sentenced to 275 months for these crimes.

Today I am 37 years old and not even the same person I was in 1997. In fact, my resemblance to that person is in physical appearance only. I am reformed. Unfortunately there is no way to be reviewed and considered for conditional early release, since the parole board is only available for people who committed their crimes before 1984 and for sex offenders. This means that, regardless of my rehabilitative efforts, I will be required to remain in prison until 2017 at a cost of approximately \$47,000 per year.

Bringing back parole for everyone will provide tremendous benefit to our state by creating a procedure whereby those prisoners who are reformed can be scrutinized for possible discretionary release.

Not only would this allow the Department of Corrections to screen those who already will be returning to the community, but will also create a mechanism whereby reformed criminals can

be considered for conditional release in times of economic hardship. Currently there is no screening at all for non-sex offenders. Such a system would give hope to the men in prison. This hope would encourage and motivate them to make changes in the areas of their lives that caused their criminal behavior. Addressing these issues is essential for them to become successful members of the community.

Finally, this will save tax dollars. Releasing prisoners when they are no longer a threat as opposed to just warehousing them until their Early Release Date, will result in considerable savings. Millions of dollars are spent each year housing individuals who have made substantial rehabilitative changes in their lives and no longer pose a threat to anyone. Why continue to incarcerate them at that point?

It is a foregone conclusion that I will be released. It has also been determined that I am suitable for that release

On September 10, 2009 I petitioned to the governor for clemency. My case eventually went before the Washington State Clemency and Pardons Board.

The board was able to reach a unanimous decision recommending my conditional release from prison. My victim even supported my petition and spoke on my behalf at the hearing. I presented evidence of significant community support including job offers, a place to stay, financial support and anything else I might need to make my transition successful.

At a cost of \$47,000 per year, the governor has decided holding me for another five years and nine months is the right thing to do. This will cost taxpayers approximately \$241,500

The final decision on my clemency petition was not made until over two years after my petition

was accepted. The Clemency Board can make its recommendation, but the final decision lies with the governor. This presents the problem because the governor

is an elected official who will make decisions according to the political climate and other factors that have nothing to do with rehabilitation or public safety.

During my incarceration many things changed in me. I started taking Offender Change Programs such as Anger Management, and Victim Awareness. These classes not only changed the way I

thought about the lifestyle I had been living but opened my eyes to how my reckless behavior affected more than just me. They also gave me tools to deal with situations I once had been unable to handle responsibly.

I was able to learn a trade in both welding and metal fabrication, and Internet technology. This enabled me to work for minimum wage for a period of time, which helped me pay off my back child support and start investing in further education.

It is a foregone conclusion that I will be released. It has also been determined that I am suitable for that release. Therefore, it would appear the reason I am to remain incarcerated for another six years

is retribution. In times of economic prosperity, retribution might be a valid concern. During a financial crisis, however, a case could be made this is mismanagement of resources.

On Oct. 21, our governor denied my petition for clemency. She went against the unanimous recommendation of her own Washington State Clemency and Pardons Board, the victim of my crime, and wishes expressed by community members at my hearing.

I have served 14 years in prison. My early release date is June 10, 2017. At a cost of \$47,000 per year, the governor has decided holding me for another five years and nine months is the right thing to do. This will cost taxpayers approximately \$241,500.

At a time when she is asking the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education, and the Department of Social and Health Services to make ten percent cuts, is this really the responsible way to manage resources?

In a recent USA Today article entitled "Prison Populations Hinder Budget Cuts," Texas state senator John Whitmire stated, "The challenge is for us to distinguish between the offenders we are afraid of - those who deserve to be locked up for life - and those we are just mad at and who can be handled outside of prison."

Sincerely,

Aaron Borrero

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