

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

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Finance & Personnel Committee

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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

January 22, 2010

Governor James Doyle
Post Office Box 7863
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Dear Governor Doyle:

The 2009-2011 biennium budget includes a Criminal Justice Reform Initiative, whereby prison inmates are awarded “positive adjustment credits” for time served. These credits reduce the term of confinement in prison, placing convicted felons back on the streets earlier than what their intended sentences would normally allow. As members of the City of Milwaukee Common Council, we are grateful for your desire to improve the criminal justice system. However, we are concerned about that this particular action would negatively impact our city’s public safety efforts. Thus, we respectfully request that the “early release” aspect of the Criminal Justice Reform Initiative be suspended as soon as possible.

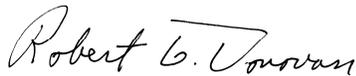
Under the leadership of Chief Edward Flynn, the Milwaukee Police Department has done a remarkable job of addressing crime issues in our city. Total violent crime is down 18 percent compared to 2008, and is down 25 percent over the past two years. There have been double-digit decreases in robbery, aggravated assault and auto theft. Total crime in Milwaukee has decreased for 7 consecutive quarters. These significant achievements in reducing crime, fear and disorder have translated directly into safer neighborhoods, safer public spaces and a better quality of life for our law-abiding city residents.

We fear that the early release program is counterproductive to the City of Milwaukee’s crime-reducing advancements. A minimum of 65% to 75% of the roughly 3,000 inmates eligible for early release will return to the Milwaukee area, thereby exacerbating our already serious recidivism problem. More than half of the individuals who are in jail are there because they either failed to comply with their conditions of parole or committed a new crime. Last year, almost 5,000 people were arrested in Milwaukee for parole violations and 600 of those individuals were then arrested a second time within the calendar year. Pointedly, nearly 60% of those arrested for violating parole had additional charges at the time of arrest. The unfortunate reality is that convicted felons are extremely likely to re-offend.

We need not look any further than our neighbor state of Illinois for an example of the potentially destructive consequences that an early release program can generate. Offenses committed after release by so-called “non-violent” beneficiaries of Illinois’ program included those convicted of attempted murder, armed robbery, aggravated assault, and weapons charges. To his credit, Illinois governor Pat Quinn suspended the program. We hope that you will do the same.

Governor Doyle, we know your commitment to a safe Wisconsin and a safe Milwaukee. Chief Flynn, Milwaukee police officers and members of the Common Council have continuously worked in cooperation to stabilize our great city, from a public safety perspective. Please do not allow our efforts to be compromised by an early release program. Thank you in advance for considering our perspective on this vitally important issue.

Respectfully,



Robert G. Donovan
Alderman, 8th District
Public Safety Chair



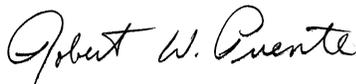
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Joe Davis, Sr.
Alderman, 2nd District

cc: All Milwaukee Representatives in the Wisconsin Legislature
All Council Members