

## **DEAR FELLOW NEBRASKANS: Get to know the Nebraska Board of Parole**

Written by Wauneta Breeze  
Thursday, 14 July 2011 20:38 -

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### **By Nebraska Governor**

#### **Dave Heineman**

I would like to introduce another one of Nebraska's state agencies, the Board of Parole. While it is a small agency, it plays an important role in our criminal justice system.

The Board of Parole was established in Nebraska more than 40 years ago and is headed by Chairperson Esther L. Casmer, who has led the agency since 2005. She spent nine years as vice-chair of the Parole Board and has more than 20 years of experience working with Nebraska's correctional services programs and institutions.

The Board of Parole consists of the Chair and four other members, who along with support staff, oversee the parole of offenders who have proven through their participation in educational and treatment programs that they no longer represent a threat and are capable and willing to integrate back into society.

The agency provides staff support for the state Board of Pardons, which handles applications for commutations, pardons and restoration of driving privileges in Nebraska.

Parole provides an opportunity for an incarcerated individual to serve the remainder of their sentence in the community, under the supervision of a trained parole officer.

The vast majority of inmates will one day return to communities. Parole officials work very closely with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services to offer programs and services that reduce the likelihood of individuals returning to prison. The Board of Parole helps ensure

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that parolees receive the essential education, training and job skills that help individuals break with criminal behavior and addiction issues tied to alcohol, prescription and illegal drugs, and gambling.

Several programs have been created by parole and corrections officials to address needs in the parole population, from intensive substance abuse programming to a stabilization program which affords a parolee, should they become homeless or jobless, the opportunity to be placed in custody at a work release facility and return to parole status once those issues have been resolved.

Supervising those selected for parole costs taxpayers approximately one-tenth the cost of incarceration each year. In 2010, more than 1,000 inmates were placed on parole with 711 successfully completing parole.

An offender who has applied themselves to available programming and who demonstrates positive institutional behavior, together with other factors parole officials use to evaluate readiness for release, is scheduled for a hearing in order to be considered for parole.

Parole Board members and staff are present each day at one of Nebraska's nine correctional facilities to conduct reviews and hearings of inmates. Each month, the Board of Parole interviews approximately 500 to 550 offenders eligible to be considered for parole. Twice each month the board conducts hearings where an individual's parole status may be revoked due to violations.

The first and most important factor for any individual considered for parole is public safety. Our parole staff has a significant role to play in evaluating the cases that come before them. Nebraska compares very favorably in national studies that have noted the low return rate of inmates released from prisons.

That success is due to the partnership between corrections and parole staff in developing quality programs and the judgment of our parole staff who take their responsibilities very seriously.