
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

March 15, 2010

Ald. Bob Donovan
(414) 708-2096

Alderman Donovan Says He Refuses to Accept Early Release Felons

*Public Safety Chair says Governor's Early Release Initiative will Jeopardize Public
Safety; News Conference Tuesday at City Hall*

In a symbolic move meant to generate greater public awareness of a state budget measure that could put thousands of prison inmates back on Milwaukee's streets, **Alderman Bob Donovan**, chair of the Common Council's Public Safety Committee, said he's unwilling to accept any of the newly released convicted felons in his near south side district.

Alderman Donovan said Milwaukee and his constituents "deserve better treatment than this." "Many of my constituents volunteer long hours in the Block Watch program and in other ways to make their neighborhoods safer, and they need someone to fight for their best interest instead of letting inmates come back early," he said.

"I'll be damned if the state is going to balance its budget on the backs of the decent, hard-working people of my district," he said. "I don't want even one convicted felon being released early to my district – period."

The alderman will hold a news conference to discuss the matter at 11:30 a.m. tomorrow (Tuesday, March 16, 2010) in the third floor anteroom of the Council Chamber at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

According to Alderman Donovan, a minimum of 65% to 75% of the roughly 3,000 inmates eligible for early release as part of the state budget's Criminal Justice Reform Initiative will return to the Milwaukee area, where – based on the documented high rate of recidivism – many will re-offend. Alderman Donovan said he's received no response to a January letter (see attached) from him and co-signed by several colleagues asking Governor Doyle to suspend the early release portion of the initiative.

-More-

Early Release Initiative Ripped/ADD ONE

Under Chief Edward Flynn, Alderman Donovan said the Milwaukee Police Department has significantly reduced crime in the city, including a 25% drop in total violent crime over the past two years. “We’ve had double-digit decreases in robbery, aggravated assault, and auto theft, and people have taken notice that their neighborhoods are quieter and safer,” he said.

“But this early release program will, I fear – and Chief Flynn has said as much – erase the tremendous gains that we’ve made in recent years,” Alderman Donovan said. “Just as (former) Governor Thompson said years ago – ‘Stick it to ‘em (Milwaukee)’ on the Miller Park financing, now Governor Doyle is ‘sticking it to Milwaukee’ with an influx of convicted felons who should be serving their full sentences.”

Alderman Donovan said Milwaukee is made even more vulnerable because of its high rate of police officer vacancies – set to approach 300 by later this year. “We are headed in the wrong direction with our vacancies, and now comes this ill-conceived idea of granting early release for some inmates,” he said.

“What’s next – brownie points for inmates who keep a tidy cell?” he said.

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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

CHAIR

Public Safety Committee

MEMBER

Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee

Finance & Personnel Committee

Steering & Rules Committee



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.

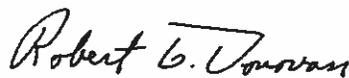
We fear that the early release program is counterproductive to the City of Milwaukee's crime-reducing advancements. A minimum of 65% to 75% of the roughly 3,000 inmates eligible for early release will return to the Milwaukee area, thereby exacerbating our already serious recidivism problem. More than 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

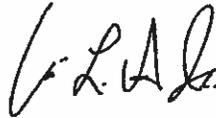
release by so-called "non-violent" beneficiaries of Illinois' program included those convicted of attempted murder, armed robbery, aggravated assault, and weapons charges. To his credit, Illinois governor Pat Quinn suspended the program. We hope that you will do the same.

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,



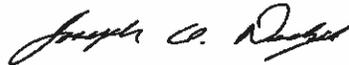
Robert G. Donovan
Alderman, 8th District
Public Safety Chair



Willie L. Hines, Jr.
Alderman, 15th District
Common Council President



James A. Bohl, Jr.
Alderman, 5th District



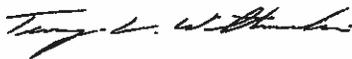
Joseph A. Dudzik,
Alderman, 11th District



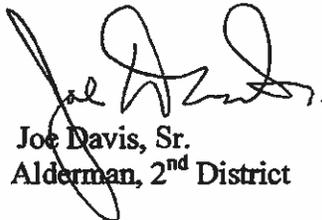
Robert W. Puente
Alderman, 9th District



Michael J. Murphy
Alderman, 10th District



Terry L. Witkowski
Alderman, 13th District



Joe Davis, Sr.
Alderman, 2nd District

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