

Gov. Evers: Takes action on Pardon Advisory Board recommendations

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today issued pardons to four individuals, following consideration of recommendations from the Governor's Pardon Advisory Board.

On Wed., Aug. 28, 2019, the Governor's Pardon Advisory Board met to hear from individuals seeking a pardon from Gov. Evers. It was the first time that pardon applications had been considered in Wisconsin since 2010.

"A pardon can profoundly impact a person's life by offering them an official grant of forgiveness," said Gov. Evers. "Mr. Nichols, Mr. Pizer, Mr. Sorenson, and Rev. Vasser have paid their debt to society, made amends, and contributed to their communities. I believe they deserve a second chance."

Gov. Evers recreated the pardon process by issuing [Executive Order #30](#). The Governor's Pardon Advisory Board reviews eligible applications and makes recommendations to Gov. Evers on who to grant a pardon to. The Board forwarded four recommendations for pardons to the governor. After thoughtful review and consideration, Gov. Evers will issue pardons to the four individuals recommended for pardon by the Pardon Advisory Board.

- Eric Pizer, now 38 years old, former Marine, committed a substantial battery when he was 22 years old during a bar fight that occurred while he was out celebrating his return home from a second tour of duty in Iraq. Since his release, he has maintained employment, earning two associate degrees in the meantime. He was also able to meet the victim in his case, discuss what happened, and apologize in-person. According to Mr. Pizer, he sought a pardon to secure better employment, specifically a career in law enforcement.
- Kevin Sorenson, now 36 years old, was convicted of a felony for selling ecstasy

at a party when he was 17 years old. Since completing probation early, he has been a career US Air Force civilian employee. He also received his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Maryland, and his master's degree in Military Operational Art and Science from Air Force University. According to Mr. Sorenson, he sought a pardon because it would make him eligible for additional military service opportunities, including volunteering for deployment.

- Reverend Mwangi Vasser, now 40 years old, was 19 years old when he was caught selling cocaine. Since then, he has worked as a barber. He also received his doctorate in theology from Emmanuel Bible College, Nashville, Tennessee. He is part of the Masonic order, Omega Psi Phi, and the Soul Seekers motorcycle ministry. According to Rev. Vasser, he sought a pardon to secure better housing and business opportunities, and to pursue being a chaplain in the US military.
- Steven Nichols, now 62 years old, was 21 when he committed a felony burglary (aiding and abetting) and a misdemeanor criminal damage to property. The charges stemmed from an illegal entry into a tavern to steal, among other things, alcohol and cigarettes, and proceeded to have a party in a local alfalfa field, causing damage. Since then, he has maintained full-time employment, gotten married, purchased and continues to maintain a family farm, travels to compete in horse events, and mentors young horse enthusiasts and riders. According to Mr. Nichols, he sought a pardon to return to hunting and to be able to travel to Canada to participate in the Calgary Stampede.

The Wisconsin Constitution grants the governor the power to pardon individuals convicted of a crime. A pardon is an official act of forgiveness that restores some of the rights that are lost when someone is convicted of a felony, including the right to serve on a jury, hold public office, and hold certain professional licenses. A pardon does not result in an expungement.

Except for the prior administration, every Wisconsin governor in modern history has granted pardons. Most recently, Gov. Thompson granted 238 pardons, Gov. McCallum granted 24 pardons, and Gov. Doyle granted more than 300 pardons.

Under Executive Order #30, individuals convicted of a Wisconsin felony may apply for a pardon if they completed their sentence at least five years ago and have not committed any new crimes. Individuals currently required to register on the sex offender registry are ineligible for a pardon.

A copy of the pardon application and instructions for applying are located on the governor's website: www.evers.wi.gov/Pages/pardon-information.aspx