Evers moves to expedite pardon process, expand eligibility

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Gov. Tony Evers has signed an executive order to expedite the pardon process and expand eligibility.

Under the executive order, the chair of the Governor's Pardon Advisory Board can send a pardon application for a non-violent offender directly to the governor without a board hearing if "sufficient time" has passed since the offender's conviction.

Evers also issued a new application that expands pardon eligibility to people convicted of a felony who completed their sentences at least five years ago and do not have any pending criminal charges or cases. Previously, individuals could only be pardoned for their most recent felony.

"I believe in forgiveness and the power of redemption," Evers said during a press conference Tuesday. "After years of the pardon advisory board sitting dormant, there are a lot of people out there looking and hoping for their second chance."

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Evers announced 71 pardons Tuesday, bringing his total number of pardons granted to 263 since the Pardon Advisory Board was announced in 2019.

"There's been nothing more rewarding for me as a human being to do this," Evers said. "The work that all these 263 individuals have done to move their lives forward in a positive, constructive way, is truly amazing."

Evers expects his executive order will increase pardons by 25 percent, but noted that there is a significant backlog in applications.

Evers added that he is on target to issue more pardons during his first term than

the nearly 300 former Gov. Jim Doyle granted during his eight years in office. Former Govs. Scott McCallum and Tommy Thompson granted a combined 262 pardons before Doyle's election, but former Gov. Scott Walker did not issue any pardons during his time in office.

Read the executive order here.

Read the press release here.