

# Sen. Wanggaard: Introduces Parole Transparency Act, bill sheds light on Parole Commission activities

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MADISON – State Senator Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) unveiled the “Parole Transparency Act”, an effort to improve the transparency and efficiency of the Parole Commission and ensure victims can be involved and have knowledge of the parole process.

“For the last year, I have been investigating the operations of the Parole Commission. Trying to find out what’s been going on has been exceedingly difficult,” said Wanggaard. “The Commission has been operating in the shadows. Stonewalling of records requests, sidestepping and violating Open Meeting laws, and violating the constitutional rights of crime victims has to stop. The Parole Transparency Act sheds light on the parole-granting process while still maintaining the privacy rights of inmates.”

The Parole Transparency Act (“PTA”) eliminates the Commission’s exemption to Wisconsin’s Open Meetings Law. The PTA also requires the Commission to post notice of its meetings on the Department of Corrections internet site, and post guidance documents used by the Commission when making parole determinations. The Commission must also post monthly and annual totals of persons granted and denied parole, and those who have had parole revoked. The annual totals must also be presented by crime, sex, race, age of the individual and locality in which the individuals were convicted.

“With Jon Erprenbach’s appointment as Parole Commission Chair, we have a chance to ensure the Parole Commission doesn’t repeat the same mistakes and operates in a more open manner,” said Wanggaard. “The PTA is an important first step to

enhance public confidence in the parole process and improve the transparency of the Commission.”

The PTA was circulated initially with Senators Julian Bradley (R-Franklin) and Jesse James (R-R-Altoona). Representative John Spiros (R-Marshfield) is leading on the bill in the Assembly, along with Representatives Cindi Duchow (R-Delafield) and Michael Schraa (R-Oshkosh). The bill is gathering co-sponsors until February 1, 2023.