

Senate tweaks Assembly bill requiring more disclosure by Parole Commission

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Wisconsin's Parole Commission would have to publicly post the names of those granted release from prison, as well as those who had their parole revoked, under legislation that cleared the Senate today.

The bill also would require the commission to post monthly and annual numbers for those granted parole, those who were denied release and those sent back to prison after their parole was revoked. Those reports would include details on the crimes for which the person was convicted.

There was no debate on the bill, which was approved 29-4. The Senate made several changes to the bill that cleared the Assembly. That would require the Assembly to sign off before the bill could head to the gov's desk.

The legislation comes after the Parole Commission became an issue in the 2022 gov's race. Republicans knocked the move to release Douglas Balsewicz, who had served 25 years of an 80-year sentence for fatally stabbing his wife. Her family insisted that they weren't notified of the decision until shortly before he was set to be released. Then-Chair John Tate II reversed course on paroling Balsewicz and then resigned under pressure from Gov. Tony Evers.

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The gov earlier this year appointed former Dem state Sen. Jon Erpebach to chair the commission.

The version of the bill that passed the Assembly with bipartisan support included a provision that would require notices of the Parole Commission's meetings to be

posted at the Department of Corrections' website with the names of individuals being considered for release.

It also sought to repeal the commission's exemption from the open meetings law.

The commission doesn't have to meet to consider a parole, and the Senate stripped out both provisions.

The Senate version also seeks to expand the victims who would be entitled, upon request, to be notified when an inmate applies for parole or is released on parole or extended supervision. The Senate bill seeks to add any member of the victim's family who was younger than 18 when the crime was committed, but is now 18 or older.

The Senate version also would require more notice that an inmate has applied for parole. Instead of those notices being mailed two weeks prior to an interview or a hearing, it would be 90 days.