



# LOUISIANA

Board of Pardons  
&  
Committee on Parole

2020 Annual Report



JOHN BEL EDWARDS  
Governor



# State of Louisiana

## BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLE

TO: The Honorable John Bel Edwards, Governor  
Members of the Louisiana Legislature  
Citizens of the State of Louisiana

On behalf of the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Paroles, I am pleased to present to you the Board's 2020 Annual report.

The year 2020 was a year like no other, filled with challenges for Louisiana citizens and people across the globe. Despite the extreme challenges, Louisiana's Board of Pardons and Paroles continued to complete its public safety mission by making informed decisions regarding offenders.

The COVID-19 pandemic has informed our practices and challenged us to find new and more efficient ways to do our work. I am really proud of the careful response of the amazing team of the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Paroles. The performance of our employees was exceptional. They remained committed to their public safety role, working at a high level to fulfill their responsibilities whether working from their home office or socially distanced at the Board offices. Staff continued to carefully prepare case files, providing Board Members with all available information to inform the decision-making process. This resulted in data-driven, evidence-based release decisions. Coordinating closely with the Division of Probation & Parole we were able to address parole violations swiftly in order to ensure public safety.

Victims, as always, maintain an important role in the parole decision making process. In 2020 the Board continued to enhance its services to victims and survivors of crime through the Louisiana Victim Outreach (LaVO) program. Through the coordinated effort of LaVO, the Division of Probation & Parole, the Crime Victims Services Bureau, and the Board's Investigative Specialists, we were able to ensure crime victims stayed informed in order that release decisions included necessary victim input and information. We continue to collaborate and develop partnerships with other entities that share the commitment to victims' rights and services.

Pardon and parole hearings are subject to Louisiana's open meetings laws. However, because of Governor John Bel Edwards' proclamations relative to COVID 19, we were able to conduct hearings in a manner that provided for observation and input by the public utilizing Zoom technology. For victims, this provides the opportunity to participate in the release decision process from their own safe environment. A dramatic increase in stakeholder participation was an immediate benefit of this new method of conducting pardon and parole hearings. For the first 4 months of fiscal year 2021 there has been over 100% increase in prosecutor attendance

at hearings, when compared to the same time period in fiscal year 2020. All hearings are also broadcast LIVE on YouTube, allowing for observation by any interested party from anywhere in the world.

We continue to see positive results from Governor Edwards' criminal justice reform efforts. Among other positive results, parole completions have increased by over 80% since fiscal year 2016. This is due in large part to earned compliance credits which an offender can earn for adherence to conditions of supervision. The incentive may afford an offender early discharge from his sentence.

This report is a short snapshot of Board operations. Thank you for taking time to review it. For more information, please visit our webpage hosted by the Department of Corrections at [doc.louisiana.gov](http://doc.louisiana.gov) the and the LaVO website at [lavo.info](http://lavo.info) or contact our offices for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Sheryl M. Ranatza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheryl" and last name "Ranatza" clearly legible.

Sheryl M. Ranatza, Board Chair

---

<b>Our Mission</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Vision</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Values</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Board Members</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Structure</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Clemency Process</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Parole Process</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Medical Treatment Furlough</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Medical Parole</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Pardon and Parole Statistics</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Responding to A Pandemic</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2020 Strategic Plan</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2021 Strategic Plan</b>	<b>24</b>

---

## Our Mission

To serve the citizens of Louisiana through informed decision-making, thereby promoting public safety, addressing the needs of crime victims, and to facilitate successful reentry for offenders who have appropriately prepared for community supervision.

## Our Vision

The Louisiana Board of Pardons & Parole, guided by evidence-based principles, shall:

- Render just determination in regard to parole release and revocations, thereby maximizing the restoration of human potential;
- Ensure crime victims have a voice in the decision-making process;
- Use appropriate Department of Corrections and community resources to facilitate an offender's successful transition from confinement to the community;
- Impose reasonable conditions of release, consistent with the goal of structured reintegration of the offender;
- Hold accountable those offenders who violate the conditions of release;
- Foster a positive relationship with all stakeholders;
- Administer the clemency process with recommendation to the Governor fully commensurate with public safety and due consideration;
- Strive to be a continuously learning organization

## Our Values

We value Ethics, Integrity, Equity and Innovation.

---

## Board Members



### **SHERYL M. RANATZA, Board Chair**

Mrs. Ranatza retired from the position of Deputy Secretary with the LA Department of Public Safety and Corrections after a Corrections career of over 30 years, which included service as Deputy Warden at Louisiana State Penitentiary for 14 years. She served in a variety of management positions throughout the DOC. She has served as Chairman of the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Parole since 2012.



### **VICTOR JONES**

Victor Jones began his career with the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office in 1977 as a dispatcher ascending through the ranks during his years of service, working in every department of the office. In 1992, Jones was selected to attend the FBI National Training Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Jones was first elected Sheriff in 1999 and was re-elected four subsequent times, the most recent election earning 91% of the votes cast. He retired at the end of his term in 2020.



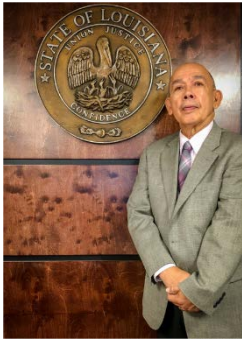
### **BRENNAN C. KELSEY, Committee on Parole**

Mr. Kelsey is a Physical Therapist with over 20 years of experience in the healthcare field. Mr. Kelsey has worked in a variety of settings including mental health, outpatient, rehab and acute care. Mr. Kelsey is a graduate of LSU Medical Center and received his MBA in General Business and Healthcare from Southeastern Louisiana University. Governor John Bel Edwards appointed Mr. Kelsey to serve as an at-large member of the Committee on Parole.



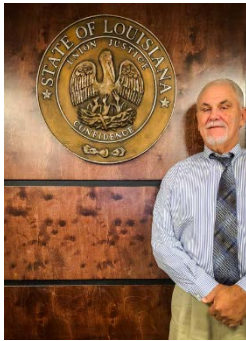
### **Tony Marabella**

Tony Marabella is a graduate of LSU, obtaining his Juris Doctorate in 1973 from LSU's Paul M. Hebert Law Center. He has participated in all aspects of the Judicial Branch, beginning as a Parish Attorney and moving on to serve as a City Prosecutor, Assistant District Attorney, and an Assistant Public Defender. He began his private practice in 1980 focusing on criminal defense. He has served as a Judge in the 19th JDC from 2003 through 2018, presiding over the District's Drug Court. He has served as an adjunct faculty member at the LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center for the last ten years.



### **ALVIN ROCHE', JR.**

Mr. Roche' served as the Director of Library Services at Southern University Law Center for 17 years until his retirement in 2007. He was previously an Associate Law Librarian and Associate Professor at the University Library. Mr. Roche' received his BS Degree in Social Science-History with a minor in Library Science from Southern University and a Masters of Library Services from Louisiana State University. Mr. Roche' serves on the Board and Committee as the victims' advocate.



### **JIM WISE**

After studying criminal justice at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, and completing the Calcasieu Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy, Mr. Wise served as a deputy in the Vernon Parish Sheriff's Office for 18 years as supervisor over all uniformed divisions. He later served as an Investigator at Louisiana State Penitentiary. Mr. Wise was first appointed to the Louisiana Parole Board in 2004 and was appointed to the Pardon Board in August 2012. He is the longest serving member.



### **PEARL WISE, Committee on Parole**

A veteran of the Louisiana National Guard, Ms. Wise's criminal justice career spanned over 20 years. She worked with the Division of Probation & Parole, working with parolees and supervising parole officers. Ms. Wise received her Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Louisiana Monroe. Governor John Bel Edwards appointed Ms. Wise to serve as an at-large member of the Committee on Parole in February 2016.



---

## Structure

In 2012, the duties, functions, and powers of the Board of Pardons were merged with that of the Board of Parole, creating a Committee on Parole.

All members of the Board are appointed by the Governor and are subject to confirmation by the Louisiana Senate. There are five members of the Board of Pardons. The Committee on Parole, a committee within the Board of Pardons, is composed of the five members of the Board of Pardons and two at-large members appointed by the Governor. The at-large members serve only as members of the Committee on Parole and do not serve as members of the Board of Pardons.

In addition to the appointed members, the Warden of the facility in which the offender is housed serves as an ex-officio member of the Board. The ex-officio member is not a voting member, nor is he counted for the purposes of the members necessary to take Board action.

Members must have a bachelor's degree and at least five years of experience in the field of penology, corrections, law enforcement, sociology, law, education, social work, medicine, psychology or psychiatry, or a combination thereof. If the member does not have at least a bachelor's degree, he or she must have no less than seven years of experience in one of the aforementioned fields. Appointees are also required to complete a comprehensive orientation-training program within 90 days of their appointment and forty hours of in-service training annually. Training components include, but are not limited to:

- Data driven decision-making, using evidence-based practices for determining offender risk and needs;
- Stakeholder collaboration;
- Recidivism reduction;
- Dynamics of criminal victimization;
- Security classifications.

The Board's recommendations for clemency are forwarded to the Governor for final action. There are no time limits within which the Governor must act on any recommendation submitted by the Board of Pardons. However, the Committee on Parole is the sole authority for granting parole in Louisiana.

---

## Clemency Process

The governor may grant reprieves to persons convicted of offenses against the state, and upon recommendation of the Board of Pardons, may commute sentences, pardon those convicted of offenses against the state, and remit fines and forfeitures imposed for such offenses. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the governor shall not grant any pardon to any person unless that person has paid all of the court costs or fees imposed in connection with the conviction of the crime for which the pardon is to be issued.



## Parole Process

The Committee on Parole makes a variety of critical decisions concerning the timing of release, conditions to be imposed, and supervision strategies. Determination of release suitability of eligible offenders is made through decisions that promote fairness, objectivity, and public safety and are responsive to the concerns of victims, members of the community, and other persons within the criminal justice system.



The Committee meets in panels comprised of at least three members. Three-member panels are randomly assigned in such a manner as to result in the smallest probability of having a panel constituted by the same three members for two consecutive months.

Any person convicted of a crime of violence against any peace officer requires a five-member parole panel. A person serving a life sentence for second-degree murder, committed after July 2, 1973 and prior to June 20, 1979, also requires a five-member parole panel.

## What is Considered

Every eligible offender is given a meaningful opportunity for parole. The Committee considers pertinent and available information relative to an offender six to nine months prior to the parole eligibility date. The Committee exercises its discretionary releasing authority based upon consideration of the unique factors of each individual case. Shown below are the guidelines used for consideration; however, the guidelines are not to be construed so as to mandate either a favorable or unfavorable parole decision. A parole decision is at the discretion of each individual parole panel member.

- Nature and circumstances of the crime
- Prior criminal record
- Character, social background, and emotional and physical condition
- Institutional adjustment
- Law Enforcement, judicial, and community attitude toward the offender

- 
- Parole plan
  - Program participation
  - Risk assessment

## **Conditions of Release**

All discretionary parole releases and mandatory releases (diminution of sentence/good-time) releases are subject to general conditions of supervision. The Committee on Parole may also require, either at the time of release on parole or at any time while the offender remains on parole, special conditions which are deemed appropriate to the circumstances of the particular case.

## **Rehabilitative Programs**

While many of the offenders who appear before a parole panel have been exposed to DOC certified treatment and rehabilitative programs, some still have not received programming that addresses their reasons for incarceration. The Board's support staff reviews offender records prior to parole hearings to identify offenders who may have special needs. The ultimate goal in these situations would be to place the offender in appropriate programming at a facility close to their post-release residence plan so they can maintain and strengthen family ties.

The current focus is on the following risk factors and possible program opportunities:

- **Substance Abuse**
  - Medical Assisted Treatment
  - Long Term and Short Term
- **Mental Health**
  - Evaluations
  - Medicaid / Medicare Sign Up
  - After Care Plan
  - Specialized Parole Agents
- **Employability**
  - Expanding use of Transitional Work Program
  - Basic Vocational Training
- **Education**
  - Literacy
  - Adult Basic Education

- 
- HiSet

## **Prescriptive Bundles**

Law requires that parole release must occur within six to nine months from the day of the parole hearing. While parole release may be denied due to lack of rehabilitative programming, in some cases the offender may not have had the opportunity to participate in programming. On the other hand, if parole release is granted, the Board may require that the offender complete a specific rehabilitation program prior to release. For some offenders, particularly those who have been incarcerated for many years, program completion may take longer than nine months. To address this issue, the Board has developed a Denial Referral System to outline a prescriptive bundle for an offender who has been denied parole, tracks their program progress and completion, and expedite that offender's scheduling for a subsequent parole hearing. The prescriptive bundle is based on a validated risk/needs/responsivity tool.

## **Medical Treatment Furlough**

One aspect of the 2017 criminal justice reform legislation provided a mechanism for medical treatment furlough. An offender who is determined to be a limited-mobility offender may be considered by the Committee on Parole for medical treatment furlough release to an off-site medical facility appropriate to the offender's medical treatment needs. The offender may only be released to a medical facility and may not be released to a residential setting. "Limited-mobility" is defined as an offender who is unable to perform activities of daily living without help or is bedbound, including but not limited to, prolonged coma and medical ventilation. Medical treatment furlough is not available to any offender serving a sentence for a conviction of first-degree murder. Table 3 on the following page illustrates board action on those medical treatment furlough recommendations presented by the DOC for consideration.

## **Medical Parole**

Medical Parole is in addition to any other parole for which an offender may be eligible. The offender must be determined to be permanently disabled (*unable to engage in substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical impairment which can be expected to result in death or which is or can be expected to be permanently irreversible*) or terminally ill (*any offender who is diagnosed with a terminal illness and death is expected within one year; the medical condition is usually permanent in nature and carries a poor prognosis*).

The Committee on Parole considers the offender's crime and criminal history, length of time served in custody, institutional conduct, whether the offender represents a low risk to himself or society, as well as an assessment of the offender's condition. In the assessment of risk, emphasis is given to the medical condition and how this relates to the overall risk to society. Medical parole is not available to

any offender serving a sentence for a conviction of first or second-degree murder. If the offender's condition improves such that he is no longer eligible for medical parole, the medical parole may be revoked and the offender returned to custody.

## Pardon and Parole Statistics

<b>Clemency Data</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Pardon Applications Received	1247	1600	514	411	357
Applications Reviewed by Board	426	460	341	355	264
Hearing Opportunity Granted	221	205	171	240	173
Hearing Opportunity Denied	205	251	170	114	91
% of Applications Granted Opportunity for Hearing	51.9%	44.6%	50.2%	67.6%	65.5%
Clemency hearings conducted	185	344	167	177	93
<b><i>Relief Requested</i></b>					
Reprieve - Capital Case	0	0	0	0	0
Commutation of sentence	112	193	114	137	71
Executive Pardon	73	151	53	40	22
<b><i>Action Taken by the Board</i></b>					
Favorable Decision (Granted)	103	164	70	83	39
Unfavorable Decision (Denied)	68	130	72	73	40
Taken Under Advisement	14	50	25	21	14
Favorable recommendations to the Governor	103	162	70	83	39

**Table 1. Clemency.** Actions by the Pardon board. Commutation of sentence is available for incarcerated offenders. Executive pardon is available for offenders who have completed their sentence. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and an active hurricane season we were forced to cancel 80 clemency hearings.

PAROLEES GRANTED WITH CONTINGENCY				
Fiscal Year	TWP	SAB	HSE	Pre-Release
2016	63	101	8	10
2017	84	103	4	5
2018	38	107	1	0
2019	80	160	14	18
2020	32	84	1	2

TWP: Transitional Work Program SAB: Substance Abuse Program HSE: High School Equivalency diploma PRE: Pre-Release Curriculum

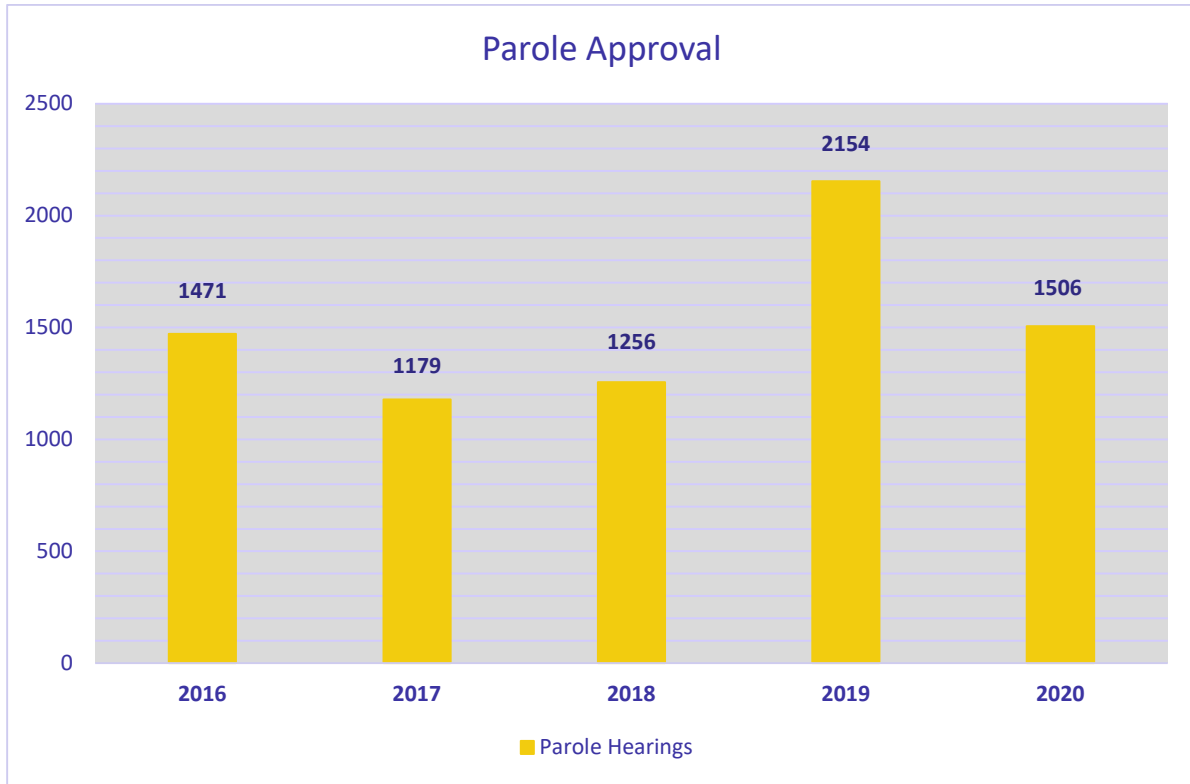
**Table 2. Parole granted with contingency.** Number of parolees granted with the requirement for program completion prior to parole release. Percentages reflect the percentage of all paroles granted that were granted with contingency. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and an active hurricane season we were forced to cancel 203 clemency hearings.

Medical Treatment Furlough	Considered	Granted
2018	11	6
2019	9	5
2020	3	0

**Table 3. Medical Treatment Furlough.** The number of medical treatment furlough recommendations presented to the Committee on Parole for consideration and the number that were granted.

Medical Parole	Considered	Granted
2016	19	16
2017	17	15
2018	8	8
2019	18	13
2020	8	7

**Table 4. Medical Parole.** The number of offenders recommended for medical parole by the DOC and the number of offenders granted medical parole by the Committee on Parole.



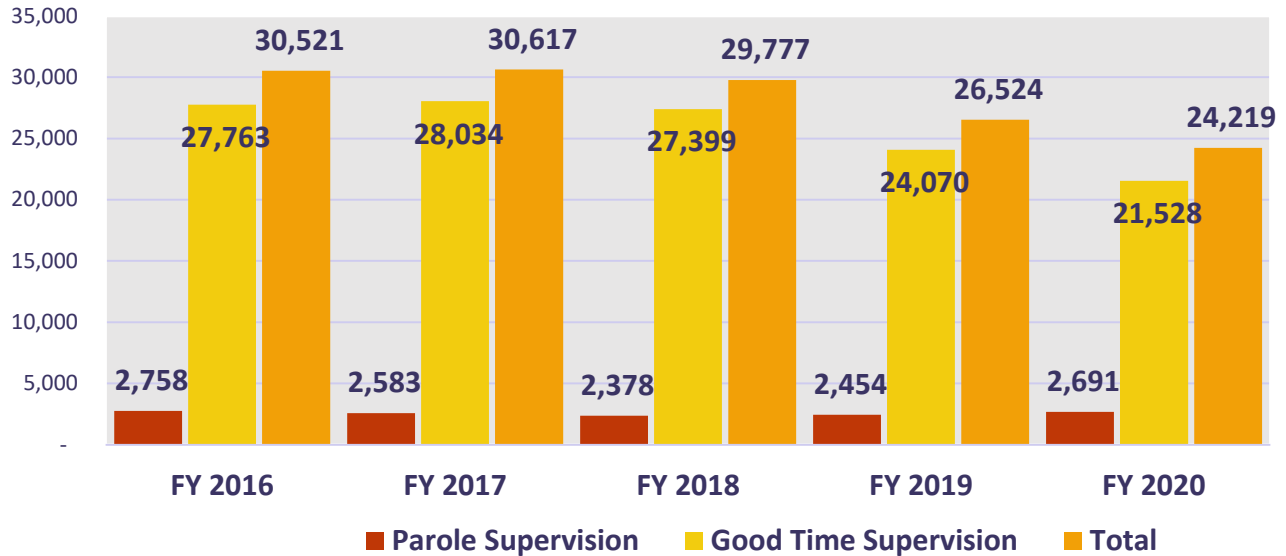
**Table 5. Parole Approval.** The number of parole hearings conducted by fiscal year and the percentage of paroles granted by the Committee on Parole. The increase in parole hearings in 2019 is a result of criminal justice reform.

DOC defines recidivism as a return to custody following conviction for a new felony or revocation of supervision after having been released from incarceration. Offenders released to a detainer, released in error, deceased, or transferred to another jurisdiction are not included. Offenders are tracked for a period of time from date of released based on year of return. Recidivism is the primary measurement by which the Board gauges the effectiveness and value of its work.



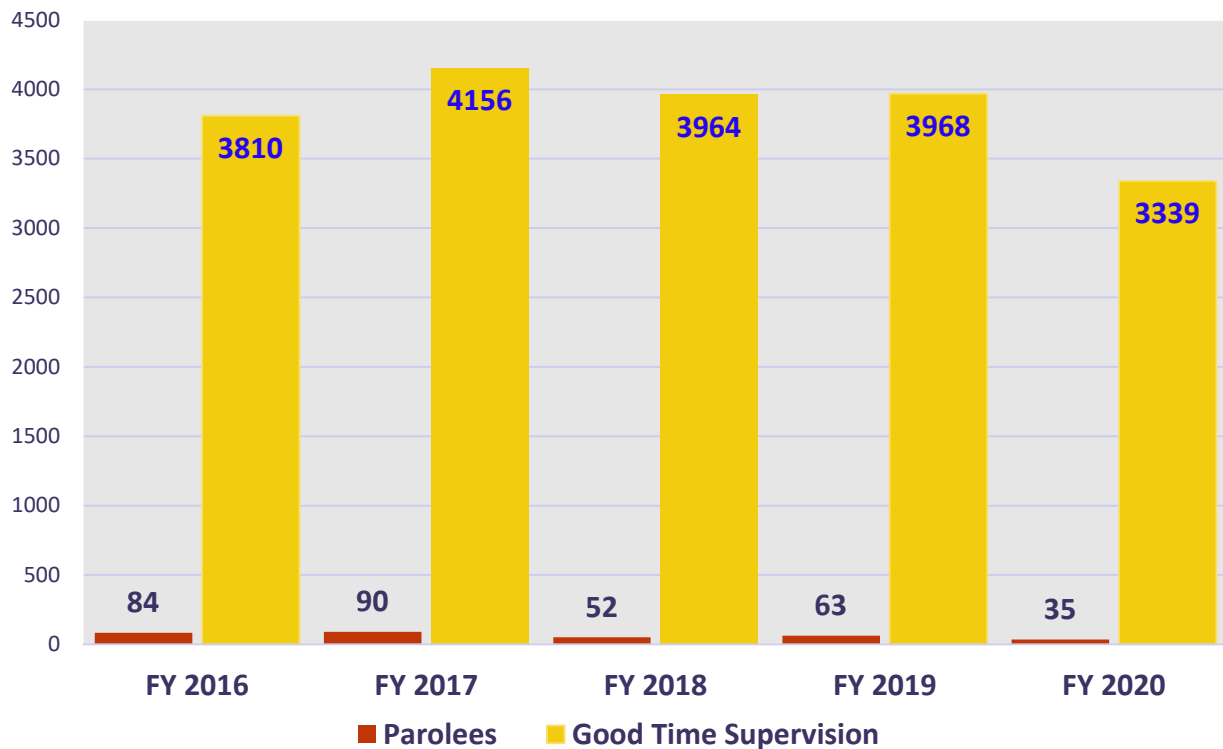
Release Year	2016	2017	2018
Parolees Discharged	307	289	479
Parolees Returns - Any Offense	62	29	19
Percent Returned	20.2%	10.0%	4.0%
Total Prison Discharges	13,327	14,464	13,153
Prison Returns - Any Offense	4,748	3,940	1,919
Percent Returned	35.6%	27.2%	14.6%

**Table 6. Recidivism.** This table shows the comparative recidivism rates between parole releases and regular prison releases. The results are significantly better for the parole population.



**Table 7. Type of Supervision.** Average number of offenders under jurisdiction of the board by type of supervision. Parole supervision reflects discretionary releases by the Committee on Parole. Good time supervision reflects mandatory releases via diminution of sentence. There has been a marked decrease in offenders under community supervision since the criminal justice reform initiative in 2017.

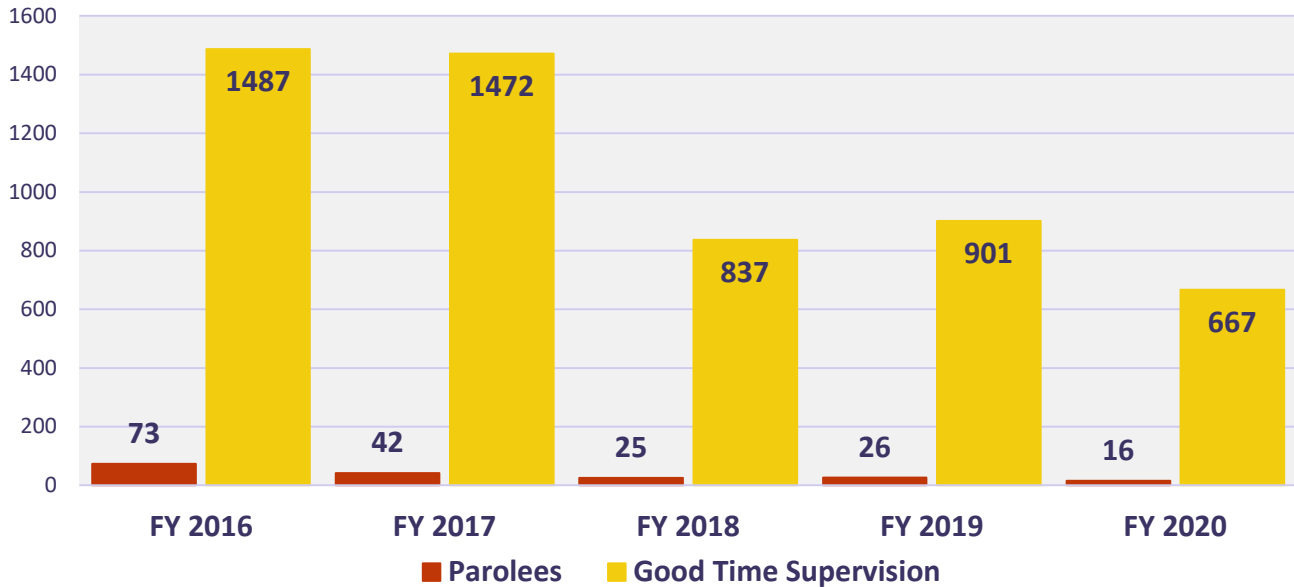
*“The work I do is very important! There are several moving parts to what we do that affect so many lives!”* –Kristy Craft, Administrative Program Manager



**Table 8. Failure to comply, without satisfactory excuse, with conditions of supervision.** Full revocation. Offenders on community supervision who are released by the Committee on Parole are much less likely to be returned to custody to serve the remainder of sentence.

Other Actions (Performed by single member)	FY 16	FY17	FY18	FY 19	FY 20
New felony conviction - Automatic revocation	756	840	1,053	1,187	962
Waived final revocation hearing	3,634	4,028	3,561	3,360	2,814
Deferred Preliminary Hearing	2,491	2,505	2,468	2,420	2,119
Unsatisfactory Termination of Supervision	1,204	1,280	1,110	866	877
Warrants	8,340	8,247	6,999	6,354	5,404
Technicals - All	1,239	1,172	781	907	685
Reprimands	1,142	1,220	1,288	1,179	1,081
Add/Remove Special Conditions	1,014	956	642	427	301
<b>Total Single Member Actions</b>	<b>19,820</b>	<b>20,248</b>	<b>17,902</b>	<b>16,700</b>	<b>14,243</b>

**Table 9. Single member actions.** Actions that do not require review by a parole panel for which a single member may act.



**Table 10. Revoked for 1<sup>st</sup> Technical Violation.** The chart above illustrates the number of technical violations for each fiscal year indicated, by type of supervision. The significant decrease in parolees whose supervision was revoked can be attributed to the Board’s use of alternatives to revocation (program participation, transitional work program, etc.)

Many of the positive benefits realized in our statistics are a direct result of Governor John Bel Edwards’ 2017 Legislative Package of Criminal Justice Reform Bills.

## Responding to A Pandemic

On March 12, 2020 when our Board made the decision to suspend hearings for 30 days, we had no idea that we would not meet in person through the end of 2020. We had to quickly cultivate a way to continue our work as the State of Louisiana’s discretionary release authority, so we reached out to stakeholders, including the Governor’s Office and the Attorney General’s Office and a plan was established. We developed strategies to expedite hearings before the Board by identifying offenders who had Pre-Parole Investigations conducted within the past 24 months and were not incarcerated for violent or sex offenses. We worked with the Louisiana District Attorney’s Association (LDAA) to address the 60-day advance notification process, which district attorneys are entitled to receive by

---

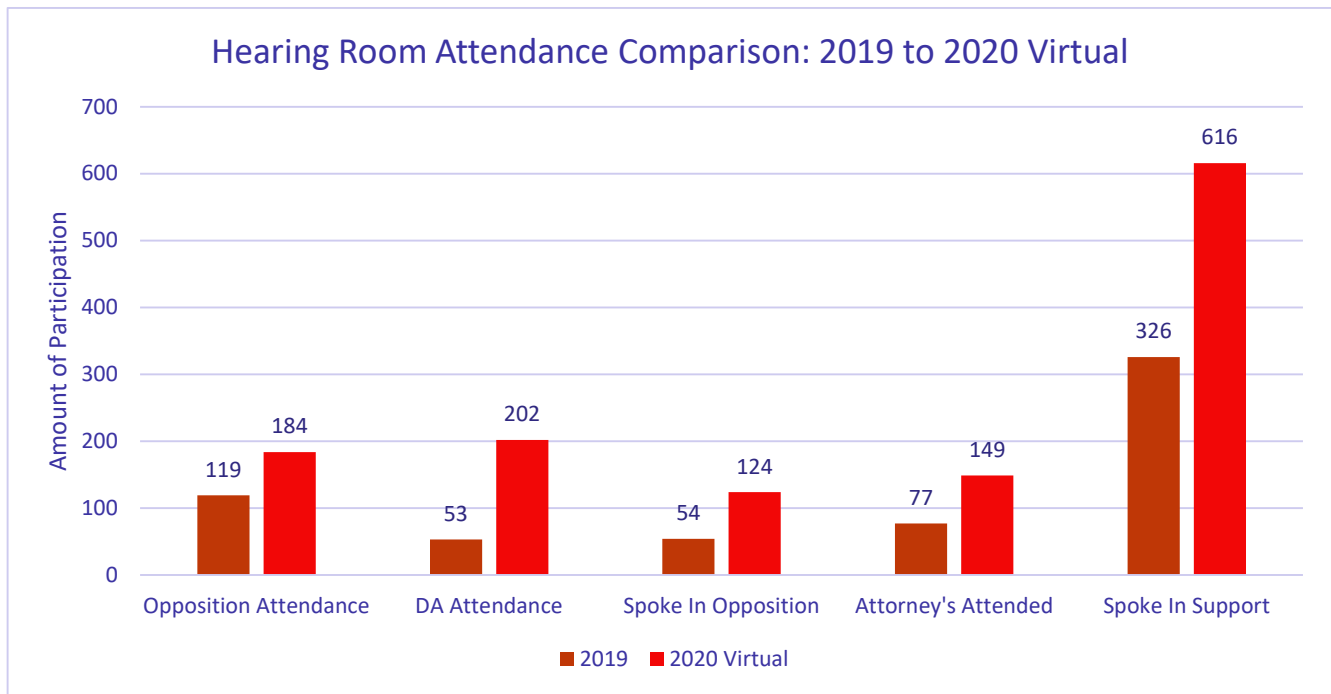
law, for offenders who were incarcerated for offenses that were non-violent or sexual in nature. The LDAA agreed to waive this process. This enabled us to quickly resume the scheduling these cases.

The next hurdle to overcome was the many local-level housing institutions that did not have access to teleconferencing equipment. Upon reviewing all enacted legislation concerning parole hearings, we made the key decision to utilize a provision of law found in LARS 15:574.4.1 that allows a single committee member to interview offenders housed in parish prisons or parish correctional centers. This eliminated the need to transport offenders to another location for a parole hearing. The single member who conducted the interview reports their findings to the parole panel considering that case for parole release. This process proved to be efficient for the local jails.

Finally, we reached out to community partners and various criminal justice reform organizations to notify them of changes in format and allow them to have input into our processes. Groups included LSU Parole Clinic, Equal Justice Initiative, Louisiana Parole Project, Voice of the Experience, and Citizen United Rehabilitation of Errant.

On April 15, 2020, hearings resumed under the Governor's Proclamation and guidance from the Attorney General's office, using our new format via the ZOOM Teleconferencing Platform. We quickly realized the benefits of hosting our hearings virtually. We have seen a significant increase in participation from all concerned parties. This practice has brought our hearing room into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and sparked the interest of our Legislature. After reviewing our new hearing processes Representative Joe Marino sponsored ACT 6 of the 2020 Second Extraordinary Session which solidified individuals' ability to provide testimony to both the Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole via teleconferencing equipment ultimately making our hearings fairer and equitable. Additionally, we have created our own YouTube channel to disseminate educational information and

broadcast our hearings live.



**Table 11. Virtual Hearing Room Attendance** The above chart demonstrates the increase in participation of stakeholders in Pardon and Parole Hearings since conducting them virtually.

Another pandemic related issue to be addressed was that of offenders who were on parole and were being held pending the disposition of new felony convictions or other violations of their supervision conditions. Our staff collaborated with Parole Officers around the state to assess these individuals and place them back in the community when possible.

## 2020 Strategic Plan

### Expanding Services to Victims and Survivors

In 2020, the Louisiana Victim Outreach Program (LAVO) responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing all victim/survivor services remotely. As parole and pardon hearings moved to Zoom, so did LAVO's counseling, advocacy, and events. The year was challenging, but LAVO staff worked diligently to continue to provide support and resources to victims and survivors of crime.

Before the pandemic closures and travel restrictions, LAVO’s Social Services Director, Julie Collura, attended a two-day Restorative Retelling training in Seattle, WA. Restorative Retelling is an individual and group therapy model for survivors of traumatic death that emphasizes resilience, and supports the bereaved in celebrating the living memory of their loved one. Ms. Collura is currently using Restorative Retelling techniques in individual therapy with survivors of homicide and hopes to begin a Restorative Retelling group in 2021. Ms. Collura also completed the Telemental Health Certification Program through Person Centered Tech. This was an online program on delivering mental health services via videoconferencing. Topics of study included security and ethical issues, equipment and technical requirements, and telehealth best practices. Because LAVO serves victims statewide, Ms. Collura will continue to offer counseling via telehealth even after in-person services resume.



On March 5, LAVO hosted an in-person victim outreach event in Lafayette. “LAVO” in the Community”, held at the University of Louisiana’s Edith Garland Dupré Library, built on LAVO’s previous events in Baton Rouge and New Orleans, and was attended by over 40 victims/survivors,



service providers, and community members. Gail Guerin represented the Crime Victim Services Bureau and presented on the Victim Offender Dialogue Program as well as the victim registration and notification process.

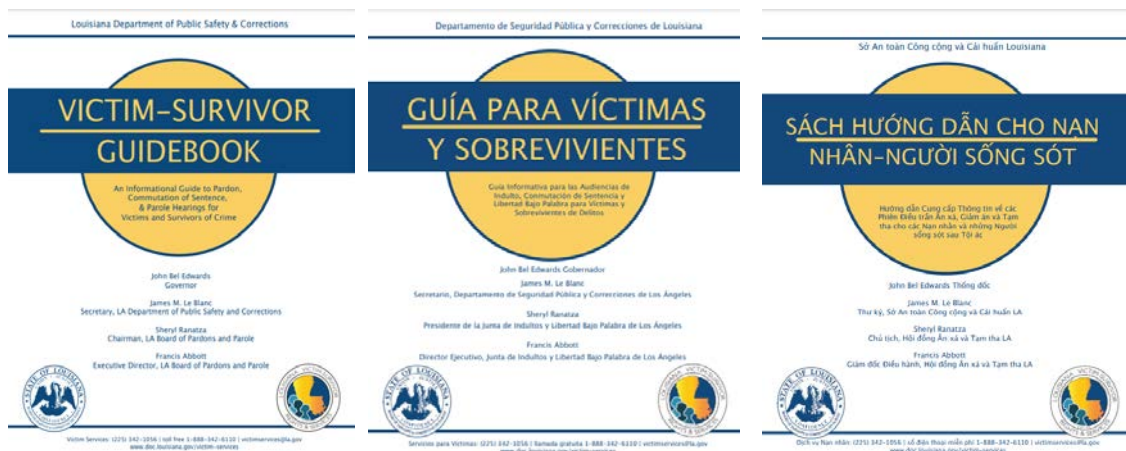
Attendees had the opportunity to learn about victim services, receive information on the parole process, and participate in a question and answer session. LAVO planned to host two other victim-focused events in other parts of the state, but was unable to do so due to the pandemic. Instead, Ms. Collura hosted a free informational webinar on November

10, for victims and survivors to learn about rights and services, how to register for notifications, and ask questions. The webinar recording is available to view on LAVO's YouTube channel.

## Louisiana Crime Victims' Rights Laws

- Victims have the right to be treated with *fairness, dignity, and respect*.
- Victims have the right to be *heard* and allowed to speak for themselves about the impact of crime.
- Victims have the right to be *present* in pardon, parole, and reentry processes.
- Victims have the right to be *informed* through consistent, reliable, and easy access to information.
- Victims have the right to be *notified* of proceedings that affect them.
- Victims have the right to seek *restitution* for damages and losses.

In June, LAVO launched CiviCore, our custom designed, secure, cloud-based client and case management system. CiviCore provides a user-friendly platform for LAVO and Crime Victims Services Bureau to enter victim data and track services provided. LAVO also produced an updated Victim-Survivor Guidebook: An Informational Guide to Pardon, Commutation of Sentence, & Parole Hearings for Victims and Survivors of Crime. The Guidebook is available for free download on both the LAVO and DOC websites, in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.



---

The LAVO team expanded this year. In October, Jolie Duarte came on board as LAVO’s Victim Services Advocate. Jolie advocates for victims and survivors before, during, and after pardon and parole hearings, provides administrative program support, and assists in LAVO’s marketing and outreach efforts. LAVO also began a social work internship program with the Tulane School of Social Work. Our first social work student was with us for the fall semester and graduated in December, and our next student intern will begin a yearlong placement in January of 2021.

***“I was appreciative that the board was informative and straightforward about the offenders upcoming release.”*** – Anonymous Victim

LAVO continues to collaborate with other agencies to provide wraparound services and continuity of care to victims and survivors. LAVO staff met virtually with representatives from domestic violence and sexual assault agencies around the state, and with the ACLU-LA. LAVO is collaborating with the New Orleans Family Justice Center (NOFJC) on a virtual speaker series focused on sexual violence. The series will take place in April to coincide with Sexual Assault Awareness Month and will be open to clinicians and advocates providing services to victims/survivors and those who cause harm. Ms. Collura is also partnering with the NOFJC to facilitate a weekly online expressive arts group for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

LAVO’s plans for 2021 are to continue outreach to victims and survivors and to strengthen relationships with community partners. LAVO will continue to offer therapeutic counseling via HIPAA secure video conferencing. In February, LAVO will launch Pathways, an online educational group for victims/survivors navigating the pardons or parole process. LAVO will continue to offer an online expressive arts group, and will offer in-person groups in Baton Rouge and New Orleans as soon as safety allows.



Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD) services were placed on hold shortly after our first quarter VOD Facilitator Meeting. This meeting was our last in-person meeting and was held in Natchitoches with the District Attorney for the 10<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Billy Joe Harrington (pictured right), serving as our keynote speaker. During the year of 2020 there was



a total of 14 active VOD cases and 6 remain unassigned due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. As protocols allowing the use of videoconferencing were put into place we were able to reengage with the offender population.

## Training Opportunities

As we had planned for 2020 our goal was to conduct joint trainings around the state with criminal justice partners. These site visits were to be at various housing facilities and Probation & Parole District offices with the idea of growing our relationships with ancillary organizations. This was placed on hold as travel and office restrictions were put in place. To ensure our compliance with ACA's

Continuing Education Standards we began to identify virtual training opportunities to continue our professional development. Working with other criminal justice professionals is pivotal to increasing the knowledge base of board members and staff



members. Multiple members of the Board participated in the American Probation & Parole Association Virtual Conference. This organization provides training specific to community supervision and is a resource for law enforcement agencies that provide community supervision. Numerous courses dealt with specialized caseloads and addressing implicit bias when developing case plans for offenders. We

---

engaged in more focused continuing education by setting up individual session with subject matter experts such as the Ashleigh Fleming Chief Psychiatrist of Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, Penny Davis the Victim Services Liaison of the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, and Grant Willis Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division for the Office of the Attorney General.

### **Develop process to evaluate new data tracking systems**

As an organization we have continued to update our in-house systems for the storage and tracking of data. The use of data to improve processes is crucial to remaining at the forefront of public safety. Improvements include updating local data storage systems as well as programs utilized to store and access Pardon Data and Parole Grant Decisions. Both of these systems have drastically improved our ability to respond to public record requests and share information with concerned stakeholders. Our Parole Decision Tracking System was instrumental as the pandemic started in March and programming was halted. Our team had to move quickly to address offenders with their releases pending the completion of programming. In response to the pandemic a total of 94 offender's conditions were reviewed and transferred to post-release conditions.

### **Increase Stakeholder Involvement**

#### **Legislative Outreach**

Early in 2020 initiatives to engage stakeholders began with our staff reaching out to all newly elected members of our legislature and inviting them to attend our hearings. This initiative resulted in meetings with numerous freshmen lawmakers in which we were able to showcase our hearing processes and answer questions about the criminal justice system. The fruit of this initiative came throughout the year as our team was consulted with on numerous pieces of legislation including ACT 103 of the 2020 Regular Session by Representative Royce Duplessis concerning the availability of

---

medical and mental health information of offenders being considered by the Committee on Parole and ACT 6 of the 2020 Second Extraordinary Session by Representative Joe Marino concerning individuals providing testimony to both the Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole via teleconferencing equipment.

***“I understand the changes we are enabling returning citizens to make will benefit the community.”*** – Whitney Troxclair, Investigative Specialist

## **Community Outreach**

As we settled into the pandemic we felt it was necessary to reach out to stakeholders with the goal of making them aware of the changes implemented to keep Pardon and Parole hearings going through this unprecedented time. This consisted of multiple media interviews with local news outlets and participating in numerous criminal justice forums with the goal of informing the public about our current processes.

## **2021 Strategic Plan**

As we prepare for the challenges of 2021, it is important to build upon lessons learned in previous years. As we learn more about the needs of the populations we serve, we can begin to focus our efforts on addressing these issues. The board’s strategic goals for 2021:

- Recruit qualified Victim Assistance Coordinators for strategic placement at Probation & Parole Offices throughout the state in order to enhance services to victims.
- Provide quality education and outreach to stakeholders in communities across the state, informing of the work of the Board.

- 
- Maintain compliance with American Correctional Association (ACA) professional standards of paroling authorities, achieve re-accreditation by the ACA.
  - Continue to enhance data tracking of the work of the board to identify opportunities for improved business processes.
  - Continue to expand services provided through the Louisiana Victim Outreach Program to provide services and resources to victims and survivors of crime.
  - Expand opportunities for Victim Offender Dialogue participation through the promotion of the program and recruitment and training of facilitators.
  - Provide professional development training opportunities for all staff.
  - Seek legislation that brings the board in compliance with professional standards of the American Correctional Association with regard to board member compensation and tenure/staggered terms of board members.
  - Provide on-going training opportunities for board members to provide the knowledge, skills, and resources to enable them to perform their work as a bridge between the correctional institution and the community, while ensuring public safety.

## 2021 Legislative Suggestions

The Louisiana Board of Pardons and Parole is one of only a handful of paroling authorities to have achieved accreditation by the American Correctional Association. Accreditation assures the public that competent professionals administer parole in Louisiana and that the work of the Board and its staff meets or exceeds professional standards of quality. There are three legislative proposals that would improve the Board's compliance with professional standards set by the American Correctional Association (ACA) and enhance the work of the board.

**To require that tenure of Board of Pardons members is no less than 4 years; to provide for the removal of Board of Pardons members for good and demonstrated cause.**

---

The ACA Standards for Adult Paroling Authorities, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition requires that “If a fixed term of office is used in the appointment of authority members, the terms of the members are staggered” and “...Legal provision allows for the removal of parole authority members for good and demonstrated cause only after a full and open hearing...”

The Board is out of compliance with the ACA standard referenced above. While the Pardon Board members serve at the pleasure of the Governor, it is important that terms of appointment provide stability of membership and reappointment should not be considered automatic.

According to the American Correctional Association’s Standards for Adult Paroling Authorities, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition:

Continuity of policy is an important goal for a correctional system which seeks equity and efficiency. Static policy is not the general goal. Change should be ... ongoing...; however, if it is to occur it should be .... with due regard for previous organizational history. Abrupt alterations of program which fail to consider prior efforts almost inevitably produce unwarranted disparities in decision and make stable program development ... difficult. In a key correctional unit, such as the parole authority, continuity of policy is a necessity and staggered terms of appointment are one important means of achieving it.

To accomplish staggered terms requires a constitutional amendment, Article IV, Section (E).

---

## **To provide for adherence to accreditation standards regarding compensation of parole authority decision makers.**

The decision-making authority of parole authority members is comparable to that of judges of courts having trial jurisdiction. The level of compensation can help attract persons with the required skills and experience to serve on parole boards.

According to the 2020 Judicial Salary Tracker published by the National Center for State Courts, the salary for an associate judge of general jurisdiction trial courts (actual salary and cost-of-living adjusted salary as of July 1, 2020) was \$155,327. Law requires that membership on the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole is a full-time commitment. The salaries of members are established in R.S. 15:574.2.

In 2016, the Association of Paroling Authorities International conducted an informal survey of its members regarding salary of parole decision makers. When compared to the salaries of the Southern Legislative Conference (SLC) states, Louisiana's parole decision makers are the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest paid. Also, when compared to the SLC paroling authorities who are ACA accredited, Louisiana's monthly case decision are the highest.





**Contact:**

**Francis M. Abbott, Executive Director**

**(225) 342-6622**

**[francis.abbott@la.gov](mailto:francis.abbott@la.gov)**

---

**Louisiana Board of Pardons & Parole**

**P.O. Box 94304**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70804**

**(225) 342-6622**

**[doc.louisiana.gov/louisiana-board-of-pardons-and-parole/](http://doc.louisiana.gov/louisiana-board-of-pardons-and-parole/)**