

(continued)

VETO MESSAGE: Yes

GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING: Yes

FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:

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REPORTS: No

HEARINGS: No

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: Yes

"Gov. Christie signs legislation abolishing mandatory early release parole," NewJerseyNewsroom.com, 5-10-11

"More Early Prisoner Release Violence," New Jersey 101.5, 5-10-11

"New law ends early release of prisoners," The Star-Ledger, 5-10-11

New law ends early release of prisoners," The Times, 5-10-11

"N.J. repeals prisoners' early release," The Philadelphia Inquirer, 5-10-11

"Early release law repealed," Asbury Park Press, 5-10-11

"Early prison release ended," Courier News, 5-10-11

"Early release law repealed," Home News Tribune, 5-10-11

"Guv Slams the Door," The Trentonian, 5-10-11

"Christie signs bill ending prisoner early release," The Press of Atlantic City, 5-10-11

LAW/KR

P.L.2011, CHAPTER 67, *approved May 9, 2011*
Senate, No. 2308 (*Second Reprint*)

1 AN ACT concerning parole release ²**[and]** ²,² amending P.L.1979,
2 c.441 ², and repealing section 8 of P.L.2009, c.330.²

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. Section 12 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-123.56) is amended to
8 read as follows:

9 12. a. The board shall develop a schedule of future parole
10 eligibility dates for adult inmates denied release at their eligibility
11 date. In developing such schedule, particular emphasis shall be
12 placed on the severity of the offense for which he was denied parole
13 and on the characteristics of the offender, such as, but not limited
14 to, the prior criminal record of the inmate and the need for
15 continued incapacitation of the inmate ²**[**, however, in no case,
16 except those enumerated in subsection d. of this section, shall **[any]**
17 a parole eligibility date scheduled pursuant to this subsection be
18 more than three years following the date on which an inmate was
19 denied release]².

20 b. If the release on the eligibility date is denied, the board
21 panel which conducted the hearing shall refer to the schedule
22 published pursuant to subsection a., and include in its statement
23 denying parole notice of the date of future parole consideration. If
24 such date differs from the date otherwise established by the
25 schedule, the board panel shall include particular reasons therefor
26 ²**[**, however, in no case, except those enumerated in subsection d. of
27 this section, shall such date be more than three years following the
28 date on which the inmate was denied release]². The future parole
29 eligibility date shall not be altered to take into account remissions
30 of sentence for good behavior and diligent application to work and
31 other assignments; provided however, the future parole eligibility
32 date may be altered pursuant to section 8 of P.L.1979, c. 441
33 (C.30:4-123.52).

34 c. An inmate shall be released on parole on the new parole
35 eligibility date unless information filed pursuant to a procedure
36 identical to that set forth in section 10 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-
37 123.54) indicates by a preponderance of the evidence that the
38 inmate has failed to cooperate in his or her own rehabilitation or

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate SLP committee amendments adopted October 7, 2010.

²Senate amendments adopted in accordance with Governor's recommendations April 28, 2011.

1 that there is a reasonable expectation that the inmate will violate
2 conditions of parole imposed pursuant to section 15 of P.L.1979,
3 c.441 (C.30:4-123.59) if released on parole at that time. The
4 determination of whether the inmate shall be released on the new
5 parole eligibility date shall be made pursuant to the procedure set
6 forth in section 11 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-123.55) and this
7 section.

8 For the purposes of this subsection, "failed to cooperate in his or
9 her own rehabilitation" shall include, in the case of an inmate who
10 suffers from mental illness as defined in section 2 of P.L.1987,
11 c.116 (C.30:4-27.2) that does not require institutionalization, that
12 the inmate failed to fully participate in or cooperate with all
13 prescribed treatment offered during incarceration.

14 ²[d. The board shall have discretion to schedule an inmate's
15 next parole eligibility date pursuant to subsections a. and b. of this
16 section up to 10 years from the date the inmate was denied release
17 '[.]' if ':

18 (1) the inmate is incarcerated as a result of a judgment of
19 conviction or judgments of conviction that include a conviction for
20 homicide or an attempt or conspiracy to commit homicide, any first
21 degree crime, or any second degree crime enumerated in paragraph
22 (d) of section 2 of P.L.1997, c.117 (C.2C:43-7.2); or

23 (2)' the inmate is serving '[a] an aggregate' sentence 'that
24 equals or exceeds the minimum ordinary term sentence that may be
25 imposed' for a crime of the first degree 'as prescribed in paragraph
26 (1) of subsection a. of N.J.S.2C:43-6'.]²

27 (cf: P.L.2009, c.330, s.6)

28

29 ²2. Section 8 of P.L.2009, c.330 (C.30:4-123.51d) is repealed.²

30

31 ²[2.] 3.² This act shall take effect immediately.

32

33

34

35

36 Removes certain required parole board reviews of parole
37 eligibility dates; repeals early release law.

SENATE, No. 2308

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
214th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 23, 2010

Sponsored by:

Senator PAUL A. SARLO

District 36 (Bergen, Essex and Passaic)

Senator LORETTA WEINBERG

District 37 (Bergen)

SYNOPSIS

Provides parole board with discretion to reconsider parole eligibility for certain crimes after a certain period of time.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning parole release and amending P.L.1979, c.441

2

3 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
4 *of New Jersey:*

5

6 1. Section 12 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-123.56) is amended to
7 read as follows:

8 12. a. The board shall develop a schedule of future parole
9 eligibility dates for adult inmates denied release at their eligibility
10 date. In developing such schedule, particular emphasis shall be
11 placed on the severity of the offense for which he was denied parole
12 and on the characteristics of the offender, such as, but not limited
13 to, the prior criminal record of the inmate and the need for
14 continued incapacitation of the inmate, however, in no case, except
15 those enumerated in subsection d. of this section, shall **[any]** a
16 parole eligibility date scheduled pursuant to this subsection be more
17 than three years following the date on which an inmate was denied
18 release.

19 b. If the release on the eligibility date is denied, the board
20 panel which conducted the hearing shall refer to the schedule
21 published pursuant to subsection a., and include in its statement
22 denying parole notice of the date of future parole consideration. If
23 such date differs from the date otherwise established by the
24 schedule, the board panel shall include particular reasons therefor,
25 however, in no case, except those enumerated in subsection d. of
26 this section, shall such date be more than three years following the
27 date on which the inmate was denied release. The future parole
28 eligibility date shall not be altered to take into account remissions
29 of sentence for good behavior and diligent application to work and
30 other assignments; provided however, the future parole eligibility
31 date may be altered pursuant to section 8 of P.L.1979, c. 441
32 (C.30:4-123.52).

33 c. An inmate shall be released on parole on the new parole
34 eligibility date unless information filed pursuant to a procedure
35 identical to that set forth in section 10 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-
36 123.54) indicates by a preponderance of the evidence that the
37 inmate has failed to cooperate in his or her own rehabilitation or
38 that there is a reasonable expectation that the inmate will violate
39 conditions of parole imposed pursuant to section 15 of P.L.1979,
40 c.441 (C.30:4-123.59) if released on parole at that time. The
41 determination of whether the inmate shall be released on the new
42 parole eligibility date shall be made pursuant to the procedure set
43 forth in section 11 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-123.55) and this
44 section.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 For the purposes of this subsection, "failed to cooperate in his or
2 her own rehabilitation" shall include, in the case of an inmate who
3 suffers from mental illness as defined in section 2 of P.L.1987,
4 c.116 (C.30:4-27.2) that does not require institutionalization, that
5 the inmate failed to fully participate in or cooperate with all
6 prescribed treatment offered during incarceration.

7 d. The board shall have discretion to schedule an inmate's next
8 parole eligibility date pursuant to subsections a. and b. of this
9 section up to 10 years from the date the inmate was denied release,
10 if the inmate is serving a sentence for a crime of the first degree.

11 (cf: P.L.2009, c.330, s.6)

12

13 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

14

15

16

STATEMENT

17

18 Under current law, the State Parole Board is required to develop
19 a schedule of future parole eligibility dates for all adult inmates
20 denied release at their eligibility date. Section 6 of P.L.2009, c.330
21 specifies that the parole eligibility date must be no more than three
22 years from the date on which the inmate was denied release. If the
23 inmate is denied release on this date, the inmate's subsequent parole
24 eligibility date would also have to be no more than three years
25 following the date on which the inmate was denied release.

26 Under this bill, the State Parole Board would be permitted to set
27 a future eligibility date within ten years for persons convicting of
28 first degree crimes.

SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2308

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 7, 2010

The Senate Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 2308.

Under current law, the State Parole Board is required to develop a schedule of future parole eligibility dates for all adult inmates denied release at their eligibility date. Section 6 of P.L.2009, c.330 specifies that the parole eligibility date must be no more than three years from the date on which the inmate was denied release. If the inmate is denied release on this date, the inmate's subsequent parole eligibility date would also have to be no more than three years following the date on which the inmate was denied release.

Under the provisions of this bill as amended and reported by the committee, the State Parole Board would be permitted to set a future eligibility date within ten years for persons: (1) who were incarcerated as a result of a judgment of conviction or judgments of conviction that include homicide or an attempt or conspiracy to commit homicide, any first degree crime, or any second degree crime under the No Early Release Act; or (2) serving an aggregate sentence that equals or exceeds the minimum ordinary term sentence that may be imposed for a first-degree crime.

As introduced, the bill provided that the State Parole Board would have been permitted to set a future eligibility date within ten years for persons convicted of first degree crimes.

ASSEMBLY LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2308

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 9, 2010

The Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2308 (1R).

Senate Bill No. 2308 (1R) permits the State Parole Board to set a future eligibility date within ten years for persons: (1) who were incarcerated as a result of a judgment of conviction or judgments of conviction that include homicide or an attempt or conspiracy to commit homicide, any first degree crime, or any second degree crime under the No Early Release Act; or (2) serving an aggregate sentence that equals or exceeds the minimum ordinary term sentence that may be imposed for a first-degree crime.

Under current law, the State Parole Board is required to develop a schedule of future parole eligibility dates for all adult inmates denied release at their eligibility date. Section 6 of P.L.2009, c.330 specifies that the parole eligibility date must be no more than three years from the date on which the inmate was denied release. If the inmate is denied release on this date, the inmate's subsequent parole eligibility date would also have to be no more than three years following the date on which the inmate was denied release.

As reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 3355, as amended and reported by the committee on this same date.

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 2308

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 3, 2011

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2308 (1R).

This bill permits the State Parole Board to set a future eligibility date within ten years for persons: (1) who were incarcerated as a result of a judgment of conviction or judgments of conviction that include homicide or an attempt or conspiracy to commit homicide, any first degree crime, or any second degree crime under the No Early Release Act; or (2) serving an aggregate sentence that equals or exceeds the minimum ordinary term sentence that may be imposed for a first-degree crime.

Under current law, the State Parole Board is required to develop a schedule of future parole eligibility dates for all adult inmates denied release at their eligibility date. Section 6 of P.L.2009, c.330 specifies that the parole eligibility date must be no more than three years from the date on which the inmate was denied release. If the inmate is denied release on this date, the inmate's subsequent parole eligibility date would also have to be no more than three years following the date on which the inmate was denied release.

This bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 3355 (1R), as reported by the committee on this same date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill is not certified as requiring a fiscal note.

SENATE BILL NO. 2308
(First Reprint)

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 2308 (First Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill amends P.L. 1979, c.441 and seeks to modify the current limitations imposed on the New Jersey Parole Board's ability set future parole eligibility. For more than thirty years, the Parole Board relied on its institutional experience and reasoned discretion to determine when inmates would be considered for parole. This common-sense standard balanced the administrative needs of the corrections system with the rehabilitative goals of incarceration, and allowed the Parole Board to devote its limited resources to consideration of appropriate cases. During the last legislative term, however, P.L.2009, c.330 replaced the Parole Board's authority to make individualized determinations of parole eligibility based on the facts and circumstances of each case, with a new mandate that all inmates be considered for parole every three years. As implemented, the law now requires that even the worst and most violent criminals who have made no efforts to progress in their rehabilitation must be considered for parole at automatic intervals, no matter how unlikely their chances for release.

In addition to the administrative burden and resources that the agency would have to expend to rehear countless cases, where the granting of parole would be patently unwarranted, the current law also would impose on the victims of these crimes the enormous and unnecessary pain of attending parole hearings every three years. Testimony during the hearings on this bill

revealed the depths of the pain and suffering endured by victims and their families as a result of the mandatory parole hearings. It makes no sense to subject these unfortunate family members to recount, again and again, the tragedies inflicted on their loved ones where there is no reasonable likelihood that the offender would be released on parole supervision.

This bill seeks to remedy, in part, the flawed system of parole review created last term by extending the automatic parole review period from three years, to every ten, for inmates convicted of murder or other enumerated serious crimes or those inmates serving sentences at least as long as the minimum term for a first degree crime. While I commend the sponsors for their attempt to provide relief to the victims of crimes through this amendment, this approach does not provide sufficient reform. Requiring automatic parole hearings at any interval not set by the State Parole Board, and not based on the Board's judgment of the facts of each offender's case, perpetuates a system that values bureaucracy over rehabilitation at the expense of innocent victims. I recommend, therefore, that the discretion and authority accorded to the State Parole Board for more than three decades be reinstated.

Moreover, the changes imposed by P.L.2009, c.330 were not limited solely to parole reviews. Another section of that law mandated the early release of any prisoner who was denied parole, or voluntarily elected not to seek parole. Whatever policy or principle motivated the passage of that law failed to adequately consider the safety of our public. In recent months we have seen the impact of the early release law. Simply stated, by removing the Parole Board's discretion to determine the inmates suitable for parole, P.L.2009, c.330 strips away the authority of the entity charged with perhaps the most sensitive

and personalized determination in our criminal justice system: whether a person has earned the right to rejoin society before the conclusion of his court-ordered sentence. Together with the current law that compels the Parole Board to triennially review all parole applications, the early release law mandates that release from incarceration is based on the calendar, rather than the offender's rehabilitation. Therefore, I recommend reversal of the changes enacted through P.L.2009, c.330 affecting the Parole Board's ability to consider parole eligibility and future parole eligibility, as provided under the law prior to the effective date of P.L.2009, c.330.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 2308 (First Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Section 1, Line 14:

After "inmate", delete
 ", however, in no case,
except those enumerated
in subsection d. of this
section, shall [any] a
parole eligibility date
scheduled pursuant to
this subsection be more
than three years
following the date on
which an inmate was
denied release"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 24:

After "therefor", delete
 ", however, in no case,
except those enumerated
in subsection d. of this
section, shall such date
be more than three years
following the date on
which the inmate was
denied release"

Page 3, Section 1, Line 7:

Delete "d. The board
shall have discretion to
schedule an inmate's
next parole eligibility
date pursuant to
subsections a. and b. of
this section up to 10
years from the date the
inmate was denied
release [,] if:

(1) the inmate is
incarcerated as a result
of a judgment of
conviction or judgments
of conviction that
include a conviction for
homicide or an attempt

or conspiracy to commit homicide, any first degree crime, or any second degree crime enumerated in paragraph (d) of section 2 of P.L.1997, c.117 (C.2C:43-7.2); or (2) the inmate is serving [a] an aggregate sentence that equals or exceeds the minimum ordinary term sentence that may be imposed for a crime of the first degree as prescribed in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of N.J.S.2C:43-6."

Page 3, Section 2, Line 22:

Insert new section "2. The following is repealed: Section 8 of P.L.2009, c.330 (C.30:4-123.51d)."

Page 3, Line 22:

Delete "2" and insert "3"

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ Jeffrey S. Chiesa

Chief Counsel to the Governor

ASSEMBLY, No. 3355

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 214th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 7, 2010

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman GARY S. SCHAER

District 36 (Bergen, Essex and Passaic)

Assemblyman GORDON M. JOHNSON

District 37 (Bergen)

SYNOPSIS

Provides parole board with discretion to reconsider parole eligibility for certain crimes after a certain period of time.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning parole release and amending P.L.1979, c.441

2

3 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
4 of New Jersey:

5

6 1. Section 12 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-123.56) is amended to
7 read as follows:

8 12. a. The board shall develop a schedule of future parole
9 eligibility dates for adult inmates denied release at their eligibility
10 date. In developing such schedule, particular emphasis shall be
11 placed on the severity of the offense for which he was denied parole
12 and on the characteristics of the offender, such as, but not limited
13 to, the prior criminal record of the inmate and the need for
14 continued incapacitation of the inmate, however, in no case, except
15 those enumerated in subsection d. of this section, shall **[any]** a
16 parole eligibility date scheduled pursuant to this subsection be more
17 than three years following the date on which an inmate was denied
18 release.

19 b. If the release on the eligibility date is denied, the board
20 panel which conducted the hearing shall refer to the schedule
21 published pursuant to subsection a., and include in its statement
22 denying parole notice of the date of future parole consideration. If
23 such date differs from the date otherwise established by the
24 schedule, the board panel shall include particular reasons therefor,
25 however, in no case, except those enumerated in subsection d. of
26 this section, shall such date be more than three years following the
27 date on which the inmate was denied release. The future parole
28 eligibility date shall not be altered to take into account remissions
29 of sentence for good behavior and diligent application to work and
30 other assignments; provided however, the future parole eligibility
31 date may be altered pursuant to section 8 of P.L.1979, c. 441
32 (C.30:4-123.52).

33 c. An inmate shall be released on parole on the new parole
34 eligibility date unless information filed pursuant to a procedure
35 identical to that set forth in section 10 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-
36 123.54) indicates by a preponderance of the evidence that the
37 inmate has failed to cooperate in his or her own rehabilitation or
38 that there is a reasonable expectation that the inmate will violate
39 conditions of parole imposed pursuant to section 15 of P.L.1979,
40 c.441 (C.30:4-123.59) if released on parole at that time. The
41 determination of whether the inmate shall be released on the new
42 parole eligibility date shall be made pursuant to the procedure set
43 forth in section 11 of P.L.1979, c.441 (C.30:4-123.55) and this
44 section.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 For the purposes of this subsection, "failed to cooperate in his or
2 her own rehabilitation" shall include, in the case of an inmate who
3 suffers from mental illness as defined in section 2 of P.L.1987,
4 c.116 (C.30:4-27.2) that does not require institutionalization, that
5 the inmate failed to fully participate in or cooperate with all
6 prescribed treatment offered during incarceration.

7 d. The board shall have discretion to schedule an inmate's next
8 parole eligibility date pursuant to subsections a. and b. of this
9 section up to 10 years from the date the inmate was denied release,
10 if the inmate is serving a sentence for a crime of the first degree.

11 (cf: P.L.2009, c.330, s.6)

12

13 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

14

15

16

STATEMENT

17

18 Under current law, the State Parole Board is required to develop
19 a schedule of future parole eligibility dates for all adult inmates
20 denied release at their eligibility date. Section 6 of P.L.2009, c.330
21 specifies that the parole eligibility date must be no more than three
22 years from the date on which the inmate was denied release. If the
23 inmate is denied release on this date, the inmate's subsequent parole
24 eligibility date would also have to be no more than three years
25 following the date on which the inmate was denied release.

26 Under this bill, the State Parole Board would be permitted to set
27 a future eligibility date within ten years for persons convicting of
28 first degree crimes.

ASSEMBLY LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3355

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 9, 2010

The Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 3355.

As amended and reported by the committee, Assembly Bill No. 3355 permits the State Parole Board set a future eligibility date within ten years for persons: (1) who were incarcerated as a result of a judgment of conviction or judgments of conviction that include homicide or an attempt or conspiracy to commit homicide, any first degree crime, or any second degree crime under the No Early Release Act; or (2) serving an aggregate sentence that equals or exceeds the minimum ordinary term sentence that may be imposed for a first-degree crime.

As introduced, the bill provided that the State Parole Board would have been permitted to set a future eligibility date within ten years for persons convicted of first degree crimes.

Under current law, the State Parole Board is required to develop a schedule of future parole eligibility dates for all adult inmates denied release at their eligibility date. Section 6 of P.L.2009, c.330 specifies that the parole eligibility date must be no more than three years from the date on which the inmate was denied release. If the inmate is denied release on this date, the inmate's subsequent parole eligibility date would also have to be no more than three years following the date on which the inmate was denied release.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2308 (1R), also reported by the committee on this same date.

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 3355

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 3, 2011

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 3355 (1R).

This bill permits the State Parole Board set a future eligibility date within ten years for persons: (1) who were incarcerated as a result of a judgment of conviction or judgments of conviction that include homicide or an attempt or conspiracy to commit homicide, any first degree crime, or any second degree crime under the No Early Release Act; or (2) serving an aggregate sentence that equals or exceeds the minimum ordinary term sentence that may be imposed for a first-degree crime.

Under current law, the State Parole Board is required to develop a schedule of future parole eligibility dates for all adult inmates denied release at their eligibility date. Section 6 of P.L.2009, c.330 specifies that the parole eligibility date must be no more than three years from the date on which the inmate was denied release. If the inmate is denied release on this date, the inmate's subsequent parole eligibility date would also have to be no more than three years following the date on which the inmate was denied release.

As reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill No. 2308 (1R), also reported by the committee on this same date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill is not certified as requiring a fiscal note.



Submit

Governor Chris Christie Moves Immediately to Protect Public Safety, Signs Bill Repealing Statutory Early Release Parole Program

Monday, May 9, 2011 Tags: [Budget and Spending](#)

Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today wasted no time in signing the bill repealing the statutory early release parole program, a law that the Administration had sought to have rolled back 10 months ago on the prediction that it would put public safety at risk. With the Governor’s signature, release of another four prisoners scheduled for today was stopped; fourteen were scheduled for release tomorrow.

“From a public policy and public safety point of view, the statutory early release law was a disaster,” Governor Christie said. “Repeal should have happened 10 months ago, when we predicted and warned of the tragic circumstances that would follow if this law remained in effect. Nonetheless, I’m relieved and grateful that the legislature finally acted to repeal this failed law. Our communities and the safety of our citizens must get first consideration, and repeal of this law accomplishes that.”

In recent months, two inmates – both of whom had previously been denied parole while serving their prison terms – were charged with murder after being released under the mandatory early release law. Other inmates gaining early release have been involved in violent crimes, including one individual who robbed and beat a woman so badly police had difficulty identifying the victim. That prisoner had twice been denied parole while serving his sentence.

The bill passed by the Assembly today and previously by the Senate includes another provision added by Governor Christie in a conditional veto issued on March 30. The conditional veto returns discretion to the parole board, where it belongs, for determining parole eligibility. Prior to the Governor’s action, a mandatory 3-year parole review for all inmates was imposed on the Parole Board – even for those inmates who made no efforts toward rehabilitation.

“These are decisions that belong not with lawmakers but with professionals who have taken on this responsibility successfully for decades,” Governor Christie said.

###

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