

**JUDICIARY COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING  
Testimony re: Raised Bill No. 6624**

An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons & Paroles

March 24, 2009

Submitted by Robert Farr, Chairman - Board of Pardons and Paroles

Good Afternoon, Representative Lawlor, and Senator McDonald, and members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Robert Farr, Chairman of the Board of Pardons & Paroles. I am here today to testify in support of bill no. 6624, An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons & Paroles.

This bill would increase the size of the Board of Pardons & Parole by two new members, who would sit on Pardons Hearings only. It would also allow the Board to conduct Parole Hearings with two part-time Board Members sitting on a three-member panel with one full-time member. Currently there has to be two full-time members on every panel.

First, I would like to testify on the need for two new Board Members. The Board hears applications for pardons in each of the four quarters of the year. Three years ago the Board was conducting one hearing in each quarter, in which three Board Members would be assigned to the hearing and another member was assigned as a back-up in case at the last moment one of the assigned members was not available. Because of the increase in volume in applications for pardons, we now conduct two hearings each quarter, which require each member of the Board to serve on a full hearing every quarter and we no longer assign a member to be a back-up. If a Board Member is not available to sit on any of the hearings, another Board Member has to sit on two hearings during a quarter. Four of the five Board Members are employed full-time, and this is an imposition we are trying to avoid. With the addition of two Board Members, we would be able to return to the pattern of having back-up members for every hearing cycle. There would be no additional cost for the two new Board Members because we would still be having the same number of hearings.

The second part of the bill allows us to have parole hearings with two part-time members sitting on a three member panel. The present law requires us to have two full-time members on each panel. Since there are five full-time members plus myself, for a total of six available, we can have three hearings on a given day. However, if one member is on vacation or out sick, or I am at a legislative or pardons hearing, or any other meeting, we are restricted to two hearings. If two full-time members are unavailable, and a third calls out sick, this restricts us to only one hearing. Part-time Board Members have the same qualifications as full-time members, and I do not believe there would be any change in the quality of the Board's decisions by allowing two part-time members to sit on a given hearing when full-time members are not available. The cost of doing this will be nominal, and will be absorbed by the agency. In addition this might increase in the number of hearings we hold, and result in a decrease in the prison population and a cost savings to the state.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

*Robert Farr*

Robert Farr,  
Chairman