

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Pardon? A Pardon or clemency is an executive act of grace or mercy that relieves an individual from all or part of any punishment imposed by a judgment and sentence for a criminal conviction. Clemency or a pardon does not erase a conviction, rather it excuses all or part of the punishment imposed.

Who is the Clemency & Pardons Board? This Board is comprised of 5 members appointed by the Governor. They include attorneys, judges, law enforcement officials and members of the public.

What can the Governor do?

The Governor can grant the request or deny it. Civil rights may be restored and the pardon/clemency may have conditions placed on it (conditional) or none at all (unconditional).

What does the decision mean for the offender? It can mean that the offender remains in prison to serve out their sentence, or that the offender will be released from prison. It may mean that the offender has their civil rights restored to be able to vote, own a firearm, or have their conviction erased from the record.

THE PROCESS

To be considered for a pardon/clemency, the offender must submit a request (or petition) to the Clemency and Pardons Board. This Board re-views the request and decides whether the case fits the criteria needed to be considered. If so, the Board will then schedule the case for review.

A notice will be sent to the Prosecuting Attorney of the county where the offender was convicted requesting any information that they can provide concerning the case. The Prosecutor will submit copies of all police reports and court documents concerning the case as well as their statement arguing for or against the request. Also, the Prosecutor must attempt to inform the victim/survivors of the hearing and their right to make a statement if they so desire.

After receiving all the necessary documentation, the Board will meet in Olympia (they meet quarterly throughout the year) to conduct an open public hearing. At this hearing, anyone that wishes to make a statement to the Board regarding their recommendation may do so. The hearings are recorded and may be televised.

At the end of the hearing, the Board will vote and announce its recommendation. The recommendation will then be sent to the Governor. If the Governor makes a final decision to deny the petition, the offender's sentence will remain intact.

If the Governor's decision is to grant the request, the offender may receive:

- An unconditional pardon or clemency
- A conditional pardon or clemency
- Restoration of their civil rights

HOW VICTIMS CAN BE INVOLVED

Victims/survivors have a statutory right to make a statement at any hearing where the offender's release is being considered. The police agency and/or Prosecuting Attorney's Office where the crime was committed will try to locate you if a hearing is scheduled. Sometimes this can be difficult if you have moved or changed your name. To insure that you can be found in the future, we would strongly urge you to enroll in the Dept. of Corrections confidential Victim Services Program today. This program will contact you if your case comes up for consideration. If you choose to participate by making a statement to the Clemency and Pardons Board, you can do this in any of several ways:

A written statement
An audio taped statement
A videotaped statement
An in person statement given to the Board at the hearing
Have a Victim Advocate read your written statement to the Board at the hearing.

For assistance in preparing your statement or for further information on this process, you may contact your local Prosecuting Attorney's Office- Victim Assistance Unit or the Office of Crime Victim's Advocacy.