



OFFICE OF THE
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RICHMOND COUNTY

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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

District Attorney Michael E. McMahon Urges State Representatives to Vote Against Proposed Parole Changes

Two bills, the Elder Parole Act and the Fair and Timely Parole Act, would pave way for incarcerated individuals convicted of serious and violent crimes to be released early from prisons in New York State

Staten Island, N.Y. — Today, Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon urged state representatives to vote against two bills that threaten public safety in New York and ignore the rights of victims by automatically granting felons convicted of serious and violent crimes a parole hearing and opportunity for early release from prison. Many of the criminals who would be eligible for early release under this proposed legislation are serving lengthy prison sentences after being convicted of murder, rape, and other violent crimes throughout New York, including several disturbing and well-known cases on Staten Island.

As currently written, the Elder Parole Act (S.15A/A.3475) allows for the consideration of parole release for all incarcerated individuals aged 55 and older who have served at least 15 consecutive years in prison, regardless of the type of crime committed or length of sentence imposed by a judge. A second bill being proposed, the Fair and Timely Parole Act (S.1415/A.4231), drastically changes the standard of parole release by disregarding the original crime committed, basing early release solely on a person's behavior and rehabilitation while incarcerated.

“I spoke out against this dangerous legislation when it was last proposed, and I am once again urging our state representatives to put the rights of victims first and not enact these drastic changes to parole requirements. Together, these bills entirely disregard the pain and suffering experienced by victims of crime and present a clear threat to public safety,” **said District Attorney Michael E. McMahon.** “Some of New York’s most violent and notorious

criminals could be released as a result of this legislation and allowed back into our communities with little accountability, as these bills do absolutely nothing to expand the number of parole officers available to monitor this influx of parolees. Giving more people parole without first increasing programs and resources is a recipe for disaster and only does a disservice to those legitimately worthy of early release by making it more difficult for them to access programs or jobs to assist in their reentry. While I support alternatives to incarceration programs and efforts to reduce our prison population overall, these bills disregard the seriousness of the crime committed and the impact left on victims and the community. We cannot allow some of the most dangerous offenders to be released back into our community simply to appease advocates who claim to want criminal justice reform. The New York State Legislature must put the rights of victims and the safety of our communities first and vote against these outrageous and shortsighted laws.”

RCDA has identified 17 defendants who are currently both over age 55 and have served at least 15 years in prison. There are also 8 more that would be eligible within the next 5 years. This would bring the total eligible for early release to 25 within the next 5 years under the Elder Parole Act.

Some examples of offenders on Staten Island who will be eligible for parole under the proposed bills include:

- John Rispoli, 61, was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for the murder of Linda Demers. During the evening of October 10, 1992, the defendant met the victim at the Towne Tavern in Rosebank, Staten Island. Less than eight hours later, he strangled her with a noose fashioned from her pants leg and left her semi-nude corpse on a patch of grass adjacent to P.S. 13, three blocks from the tavern. Later that day, he spoke to detectives and confessed to her murder.
- Keith Vischio, 61, was sentenced to 20 years to life for the murder of 10-year-old Lorraine Pacifico. On July 7, 1980, Vischio, purportedly under the influence of drugs and alcohol, murdered the victim near her Oakwood home, by smashing her skull 20 times with a rock then slashing her stomach, from neck to waist, several times with a broken beer bottle. Her body was found, partially nude, three nights later.
- Andre Rand, 87, was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. On July 15, 1981, Rand abducted Holly Ann Hughes, 7, as she walked on a street in her Port Richmond neighborhood near her home on Park Avenue and Ann Street in Port Richmond. Her body was never found. Not until 2001 was there sufficient evidence to prosecute Rand for this crime. He was convicted of first-degree kidnapping. He had previously been convicted of abducting 12-year-old Westerleigh resident Jennifer Schweiger in July 1987. Her body was found a month later. Rand remains a suspect in connection with other disappearances.
- Daniel Stratton, 54, was sentenced to 25 years to life. In August 1988, Stratton lured his victim into a car, bludgeoned her to death and dumped her body out in the woods on the South Shore. He is the only suspect in another murder of a woman killed in the same manner.

Other well-known incarcerated individuals who committed murders and violent crimes in New York State and would be eligible for parole under these proposed pieces of legislation include:

David Berkowitz

Date of Birth: June 1, 1953 (age 67)

Entered Prison: November 13, 1978

Sentence: 25 years to life in prison

Earliest Release Date: May 2018

Highest Charge: Murder in the Second Degree

Crime: Serial killer known as the "Son of Sam," Berkowitz was convicted of murdering six people and wounding seven others in a spree of shootings that occurred in 1976 and 1977. The crimes caused panic in New York City.

Mark David Chapman

Date of Birth: May 10, 1955 (age 66)

Entered Prison: August 25, 1981

Sentence: 20 years to life in prison

Earliest Release Date: August 2016

Highest Charge: Murder in the Second Degree

Crime: Chapman was convicted of killing John Lennon outside The Dakota apartment building in Manhattan in 1980. His widow, Yoko Ono, has written to the parole board to keep Chapman in prison.

William Blake

Date of Birth: Oct. 10, 1963 (age 57)

Entered Prison: July 10, 1987

Sentence: 77 years to life in prison

Earliest Release Date: June 6, 2060

Highest Charge: Murder in the First Degree

Crime: Blake fatally shot Onondaga County Sheriff's Deputy David Clark and seriously wounded Deputy Bernard Meleski in an escape attempt from DeWitt Town Court in 1987.

Colin Ferguson

Date of Birth: Jan. 14, 1958 (age 63)

Entered Prison: March 23, 1995

Sentence: 315 years to life in prison

Earliest Release Date: Aug. 26, 2309

Highest Charge: Murder in the Second Degree

Crime: Ferguson murdered six people and wounded 19 others in a shooting rampage on the Long Island Railroad in December 1993.

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