



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON —

Washington State Clemency & Pardons Board Policy Manual

Revised and Adopted July 2025.

I. OVERVIEW OF THE CLEMENCY & PARDONS PROCESS

The Washington State Constitution, Article III, Section 9, provides the Governor the authority to grant pardons, as does RCW 10.01.120 and RCW 9.94A.728. In addition, the Governor may grant an extraordinary release from incarceration under RCW 9.94A.728. The Clemency and Pardons Board (Board) has been established within the Office of the Governor pursuant to RCW 9.94A.880 and RCW 9.94A.885. The Board receives Petitions from individuals, the Department of Corrections, and organizations for commutation of sentences and pardons of offenders' convictions and makes recommendations on those Petitions to the Governor. RCW 9.94A.885(1). The Governor makes the final decision in all cases heard by the Board.

The Board is also authorized to grant a Petition to restore the right to engage in political office, if lost by operation of state law because of federal or out-of-state felony convictions. RCW 9.94A.885(2). However, since most people's right to vote would be restored by operation of law, and the right to engage in political office is ordinarily restored upon registration to vote, it would be unnecessary for the Board to take any action to restore the right to engage in political office. The Board is not aware of other circumstances in which the right to engage in political office is lost because of convictions for federal offenses or out-of-state felonies. However, a person who believes a Petition for a Certificate of Restoration limited to engaging in political office is necessary due to unique circumstances, they may explain the circumstances, complete a copy of Petition for Pardon form, and the Board may consider the request.

The Board consists of five members appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate. RCW 9.94A.880(1). Members of the Board serve terms of four years or until their successors are appointed. RCW 9.94A.880(2). The Board elects a chairperson and a vice-chairperson from among its members. Members of the Board conduct hearings on a quarterly basis, or as needed, to review Petitions requiring Board consideration. Hearings are usually scheduled for the second Thursday and Friday of the month in March, June, September and December.

This document describes the Board's policies and general procedures for receiving and considering Petitions from interested parties. Any procedure may be waived at the discretion of the Board if the circumstances warrant it. These policies are intended for guidance only and do not create, alter, or amend a right or benefit, substantive or procedural, for any individual or organization.

II. PETITION FOR PARDON OR COMMUTATION

The Board generally reviews and hears Petitions for pardon or commutation only in cases in which judicial remedies for the conviction have been concluded to a final decision. All direct appeals must be exhausted or the time within which to appeal has expired. This generally means that (1) a Petition will not be heard until all direct appeals have been exhausted or until the time within which to appeal has expired; (2) for commutations, the prosecuting attorney has completed their review of a SB 6164 request; if they have not, a petitioner would need to indicate the date the SB 6164 request was received by the prosecuting attorney; and (3) the petitioner has tried, if available, to vacate their conviction in the court of record, and was denied. In most cases, and as determined by members of the Preliminary Review Committee (PRC), the Board will not

consider a Petition for Pardon/Commutation where the conviction is not **ten (10) years** post-conviction. Absent unique or emergency circumstances, the Governor will not consider a request for pardon or commutation unless a Petition has been submitted to the Board.

The Board ordinarily does not consider new Petitions from the same individual on the same matter until **three (3) years** have elapsed from the date of the previous hearing. Additionally, the Board does not consider new Petitions from the same individual on the same matter until **three (3) years** have elapsed from the date of previously being denied an opportunity for hearing by the Board's Preliminary Review Committee. The Board may make exceptions where the circumstances are exceptional or where there is new information not previously considered by the Board.

If the petitioner is, or was, incarcerated, it is the expectation of the Board that the petitioner is not found to have committed any serious infractions for no less than three (3) years prior to the submission of the Petition. Additionally, it is the expectation of the Board that the petitioner is not found to have committed any serious infractions through the date of which the clemency hearing takes place. If a petitioner is found to have committed a serious infraction between the time that their Petition is granted a hearing and the date of the actual hearing, the Petition will be removed from the hearing list and the petitioner will need to wait three (3) years before they can submit a new Petition.

A. Form of Petition

The Board has implemented the efficiency of a paperless process by transitioning to providing and receiving Board related materials in electronic format. If petitioners have access to a computer and the internet, they may obtain a Petition form and review instructions by visiting the Board's website at <http://www.governor.wa.gov/clemency/default.asp>. Petitioners may also contact the Board's staff by email at CPBoard@atg.wa.gov. If petitioners do not have access to a computer and the internet, they may continue to communicate via telephone at (360) 586-1445 or via the United States Mail by addressing correspondence to the:

**Washington State Clemency and Pardons Board
Office of the Attorney General
PO Box 40116
Olympia, Washington 98504-0116**

It is important that the petitioner provide as much detailed information as possible in response to the questions on the Petition form. If a petitioner is submitting a Petition for Commutation, the petitioner is required to include a copy of his/her infraction history from DOC with the initial submission of the Petition. Failure to complete every section on the Petition form may render the submission as incomplete. **Please do not write "see attached."** Use the space provided to start answering the question and include any information that does not fit in the space on a separate piece of paper.

All petitioners must affix their own signature to their petition. A signature from petitioner's counsel, or any other party or representative are not permitted and will result in the rejection of the petition. **The petition will not be accepted for a review or hearing unless there is an**

original handwritten signature. This policy ensures the authenticity and integrity of all petitions submitted and confirms that the individual listed as petitioner is the one who initiated the action and is in full agreement with its contents.

To ensure consistency, efficiency, and fairness in the preliminary review process, petitioners must limit their initial petition packet to no more than **60 pages**, inclusive of all supporting documentation, attachments, and exhibits. This limit does not include the required Petition Form, Judgment and Sentence, and charging documents (e.g., Probable Cause, Information, Indictment, Complaint). Petitions exceeding the **60-page limit** will be deemed non-compliant. The Board reserves the right to return any petition packet that exceeds the limit without review, with instructions to correct and resubmit. Petitioners will be notified of the issue and may resubmit a compliant packet within a specified timeframe.

For incarcerated individuals you are required to provide your DOC infraction history (only founded infractions). If you are not able to obtain a copy of your DOC infraction history, please flag this for us and we will obtain a copy for our records. If your file is selected for hearing, you can submit any remaining documents for the Board's review up to **two (2) weeks** prior to your hearing date.

In addition, a petitioner who wishes to have his or her medical records reviewed must sign a medical records release that complies with the applicable health care records and confidentiality laws and rules allowing the Governor, the Board, the Attorney General's Office (AGO), and the AGO's staff permission to review the petitioner's medical history. This is particularly necessary for a Petition for extraordinary release from incarceration under RCW 9.94A.728. In other cases, other waivers or releases may be requested. The appropriate waiver form is included in the Petition packet.

If a petitioner is represented by an attorney, the Clemency and Pardons Board support staff and Board members will communicate with the petitioner only through their attorney.

It is the responsibility of the petitioner or his legal counsel to provide a copy of the Petition and all written materials submitted in support to a Petition to the Prosecuting Attorney's Office at the same time it is supplied to the Board, consistent with deadlines set by the Board for receipt of submissions.

B. Consideration of Petitions

In determining what recommendation to make to the Governor, the Board focuses on the existence or non-existence of "extraordinary" circumstances, pursuant to RCW 9.94A.728 and RCW 9.94A.885(1). The petitioner should demonstrate why his or her circumstances are extraordinary and warrant the exercise of the Governor's discretionary pardon power.

Washington law does not define "extraordinary" circumstances, and there is no limitation on the factors the Board may consider in making its recommendation to the Governor. Petitioners should submit to the Board information and supporting documentation related to any factors that demonstrate that the circumstances are extraordinary and warrant relief. Petitioners should fully consider and explain how their circumstances differ from similarly situated individuals.

Examples of factors that petitioners have presented include the following:

- The seriousness of the offense.
- The impact on the victims.
- Whether there is a significant and documented need for clemency.
- Acceptance of responsibility, remorse, and atonement.
- Personal development and positive life changes since the offense occurred.
- The offender's criminal history and other relevant background.
- Whether the individual has complied with all obligations imposed by the court.
- The amount of time elapsed since the offense occurred.
- The risk or benefit to the community.

The Board will also consider all written materials submitted in support or in opposition to a Petition, consistent with deadlines set by the Board for receipt of submissions. The Board expects that everyone who submits a letter of recommendation in support of a petitioner is aware of the specific criminal conviction and some of the related facts, and of a petitioner's specific request for clemency. It is petitioners' obligation to ensure that their references are thus informed.

III. REVIEW & HEARING PROCESS FOR PETITIONS FOR PARDON OR COMMUTATION

A. Preliminary Review Committee

Each Petition is reviewed by the Preliminary Review Committee consisting of two Board Members on a rotational basis. The Preliminary Review Committee considers whether the Petition may demonstrate the existence of extraordinary circumstances and warrant a hearing. On the vote of one member of the Preliminary Review Committee, the Petition will be scheduled for a hearing before the full Board. After review, the petitioner receives notice of the decision of the Preliminary Review Committee.

B. Notice to Petitioner and Interested Parties Upon Scheduling of Hearing

The following parties receive notice from the Board of Petitions for Pardon or Commutation:

- Petitioner: The Petitioner will receive notification of the hearing date, time, and location of the hearing.
- Indeterminate Sentencing Review Board (ISRB): If the ISRB determines that a petitioner is within its jurisdiction, it provides a case analysis to the Board.
- Department of Corrections (DOC): Initially, the DOC provides the Board with the petitioner's criminal history and a Legal Face Sheet if the petitioner is currently an incarcerated offender. If the Petition is scheduled for a hearing, the DOC provides a case analysis for cases not under the jurisdiction of the ISRB.

- **Prosecuting Attorney:** The prosecuting attorney's office complies with its responsibilities under RCW 9.94A.885(3), which include notifying victims and survivors of victims so that they may participate in the hearing. The United States Attorney's Office receives notice in appropriate cases of Petitions set for hearing. If a petitioner's conviction is based on their actions causing the death of another person, the Board will require notice to the prosecuting attorney to be a minimum of six (6) months.

The law also requires that the prosecuting attorney of the county where the conviction was obtained be notified at least thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled hearing that a Petition has been assigned a hearing date, the date and time of the hearing, and the place at which the hearing on the Petition will be held. The Board may waive the 30-day notice requirement in cases where it determines that a waiver is necessary to permit timely action on the Petition.

C. Hearing Process

The Board considers the Petitions at regularly scheduled quarterly hearings. The hearings are open to the public. A court reporter will attend and transcribe all hearings. In addition to the Petitions selected by the Preliminary Review Committee for hearing, the Governor, Chairperson, or a Board-majority may voluntarily call a Special Hearing on a Petition, in accordance with the Bylaws. At the hearing, the Board hears oral statements, deliberates, and makes a final decision concerning their recommendation to the Governor that Petitions be granted or denied.

1. General Introduction

At the opening of each hearing, the Chairperson introduces each member of the Board, the Board staff, legal counsel, and representatives from the DOC and ISRB. The Chairperson also provides a brief overview of the hearing process.

The order in which Petitions are heard is determined by the Board and Staff. The order of Petitions on the Board's Agenda is generally as follows:

- (1) Petitions for Pardon or Commutation involving petitioners who are incarcerated and who will appear by telephone or Zoom.
- (2) All other Petitions for Pardon or Commutation.

2. Oral Presentations and Consideration of Facts

All individuals who are granted a hearing for a pardon, commutation, or restoration of rights must appear in person or via Zoom. A petitioner may appear telephonically only if requested and approved by the Chair.

The petitioner, his/her representative, witnesses, the prosecutor or the U.S. Attorney, victims/victim family members, and/or other interested persons may address the Board. If the petitioner is incarcerated, he or she may arrange to make a statement by telephone or Zoom. Pursuant to RCW 7.69 and 9.94A.885, victims and survivors of victims have the right to present

statements in person, via audio or videotape, or other electronic means, or in writing, at any hearing on a Petition for Pardon or Commutation.

To gauge how much time is needed for each case, the petitioner or his/her representative, are required to provide the Board with a list of speakers two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled hearing. Additionally, the prosecutor's office is required to provide the Board with a list of speakers, to include any potential victims/family members wishing to speak, two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled hearing. The Board may limit the length of time and the number of individuals who may address the Board, other than as required by law.

Among the areas of consideration, the Board may inquire into the underlying facts of the convictions, because doing so may assist in understanding the issues presented in the Petition. However, the hearing is not a forum to retry the conviction. A rare exception may be made if the law provides no judicial recourse for consideration by the courts of newly discovered and incontrovertible proof of actual innocence.

3. Board Deliberations and Recommendation

At the end of the oral presentations, the Board deliberates and reaches a determination. The Board may recommend that the Governor deny the Petition or grant the Petition with or without conditions. Deliberations on the recommendation occur in the public hearing. Each member will vote and may explain his or her reasons for the recommendation. Petitioners and interested parties should not interrupt the deliberations process but may answer any additional questions the Board raises during its deliberations.

After the Board has reached a decision, the Chairperson announces it and closes the Board's record on the Petition. The recommendation is submitted to the Governor, who is not bound to follow the Board's recommendation or take any action on the Petition.

4. Consideration of Late Submissions

Prior to the scheduled hearing on a Petition, the Board reviews all documents submitted in favor and in opposition of the Petition. Due to the Board's strict adherence to established timelines for the review processes, additional submissions concerning a Petition set for hearing from either side will not be considered by the Board if received later than the date specified by Board staff—usually two (2) weeks prior to the hearing date. The exception to this is for any victim and/or witness statements which will be accepted at any point, but preferably prior to the specified two (2) week mark.

5. Requests for Continuances

By Petitioner:

The Board's Quarterly Hearings are set in advance and posted on the Board's website, as well as filed with the Code Reviser. Submission deadlines are also posted on the Board's website for purposes of determining when a Petition will most likely be set for hearing before the full Board if selected. By submitting a Petition, the Board expects that the petitioner will be ready and able

to move forward with the hearing on any one of the dates set forth in the Notice of Quarterly Hearings. At the time of submitting a Petition, the petitioner may make a specific written request that his/her hearing, if selected, not be set on a specific Quarterly Hearing date.

Hearings before the Board are scheduled on a space available basis. Continuances are not favored and will not be routinely granted. A request for a continuance due to scheduling conflicts or lack of preparation will be explicitly denied. The requesting party must demonstrate that extraordinary or exceptional circumstances exist. Absent extraordinary or exceptional circumstances such as sudden, severe medical emergencies involving the petitioner or an immediate family member, unforeseen natural disasters, or unavoidable legally mandated obligations, such as jury duty or court appearances, once a Petition is selected for hearing before the full Board, the Board will not agree to continue the hearing of a Petition to a different Quarterly Hearing date. If a continuance is sought, a written request should be submitted not later than two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled hearing date. If a request for continuance is denied by the Board, the petitioner has the option of withdrawing his/her Petition from the Board's Agenda and reapplying at a future time or going forward with the hearing as scheduled.

By Prosecutor and/or victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crime:

In recognition of the severe and detrimental impact of crime on victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crime, a thoughtful recommendation on a Petition for clemency is dependent upon input from the victims and survivors of victims of crime. It is the intent of the Board to ensure that all victims and survivors of victims of crime are afforded a meaningful role in the clemency process.

It is also the intent of the Board to ensure that the prosecuting attorney who obtained the conviction and the law enforcement agency that conducted the investigation are afforded a meaningful role in the clemency process.

A request for a continuance by the prosecutor, the law enforcement agency that conducted the investigation, or the victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of the crime may be granted by the Board, if good cause is shown—a request for a continuance due to scheduling conflicts or lack of preparation will be explicitly denied. The requesting party must demonstrate that extraordinary or exceptional circumstances exist. Absent extraordinary or exceptional circumstances such as sudden, severe medical emergencies or an immediate family member, unforeseen natural disasters, or unavoidable legally mandated obligations, such as jury duty or court appearances, once a Petition is selected for hearing before the full Board, the Board will not agree to continue the hearing of a Petition to a different Quarterly Hearing date. If a continuance is sought, a written request should be submitted not later than two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled hearing date. Any subsequent request for a continuance will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

D. Requests for an Expedited Hearing

Upon receiving a completed Petition which includes a request for expedited hearing, the Board Chair will conduct an initial review to determine whether the Petition meets the bar for expedited consideration. If the Board Chair determines the criteria has been met, the Petition will then be forwarded to the Preliminary Review Committee who will then decide whether the Petition

should be granted or denied a hearing. If it is denied, the Petition stops there. If a hearing is granted, the Petition will be routed back to the Board Chair for a final review. This final review will be undertaken by the Board Chair to determine the speed by which a hearing should be held. For example, can the Petition wait until the next special set hearing or should an emergency hearing be scheduled. This also allows the Board Chair to ensure consistency is maintained from one Petition to the next Petition when an expedited hearing is granted. Once it is confirmed that an expedited hearing is warranted, the petitioner and the prosecutor will each receive notice of the Board's decision to grant the hearing. Please note that the Board has a policy that regulates victim and prosecutor notification, as identified by statute.

Additionally, the Board would note that expedited hearings do not take precedence over a Petition that has already been set for hearing. If necessary, the Board will schedule a special set hearing date and time to hear an expedited Petition, but they will not remove an already scheduled Petition from its place.

In determining whether a hearing should be expedited and heard sooner than originally scheduled, a petitioner must demonstrate emergent circumstances necessitating immediate attention. This includes demonstrating that a decision regarding clemency is not their only relief, but that granting the requested relief would alleviate and address the emergent circumstance. This may include, but is not limited to:

1. Documented collateral consequences resulting from their conviction which are imminent and concrete.
2. Documented medical necessity, in which the relief sought by petitioner would allow for immediate related treatment.
3. Documented educational or vocational opportunity, in which the relief sought by petitioner would allow them to accept and/or participate in such opportunity, and expedition of their hearing allows petitioner to meet a documented deadline from the institution that they may be enrolled with.

In addition to a petitioner establishing emergent circumstance(s), the Board must also consider the following:

1. The ability of the Board to have quorum for the hearing, given the relief requested.
2. The availability of the prosecutor and any witnesses they may present.
3. Whether the petitioner has clearly demonstrated an emergent circumstance necessitating an expedited hearing.

In making such a request, the petitioner is solely responsible for contemporaneously seeking a request for an expedited hearing (*i.e.* once the emergent circumstance is concretely known to petitioner). The petitioner must properly serve the appropriate Prosecutor's Office in any communications with the Board regarding a request for an expedited hearing. Failure to do so will result in the Board not considering such a request until proper service is affected.

IV. ANNUAL CALENDAR FOR PROCESSING PETITIONS

Board hearings are scheduled quarterly in the months of March, June, September, and December, generally on the second Thursday and Friday of the month.

V. BOARD MEMBER'S IMPARTIALITY

To maintain a clemency and pardons system that openly and objectively evaluates Petitions before recommendations are made to the Governor, a Board member will not discuss a Petition pending before the Board, or a matter anticipated to be presented to the Board, with anyone outside of the quarterly hearings. Please do not contact a member of the Board about a Petition.

Board members shall be impartial and make their recommendations solely on the record presented to them through the process established by the Board. Board members are required to disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest or *ex parte* communication and shall disclose any such conflicts or communications on the record at the hearing. For purposes of this section, the term "*ex parte*" shall mean where, without notice, one or more interested parties is not present to participate in the communication.

After disclosing a real or perceived conflict or *ex parte* communication, a Board member may either choose to recuse him/herself or may choose to continue in the proceeding if the Board member believes he or she can exercise his or her statutory duty in a fair, impartial, and objective manner. Such recusal is an act taken by a Board member of his or her own volition.

VI. DISCRETIONARY POWERS OF THE BOARD

Nothing in these policies is intended or should be construed to limit the Board's statutory authority to consider, hear, or make a recommendation to the Governor to grant or deny a Petition for pardon, commutation or restoration of rights.

VII. AMENDMENTS TO THE POLICIES

By majority vote, with a quorum present, the Board may adopt, amend, or repeal these policies at anytime it deems appropriate. Minor clerical changes may be made at the direction of the Chairperson without a vote of the Board.

CERTIFICATION OF ADOPTION

The undersigned Chairperson of the Washington State Clemency and Pardons Board certifies that the above policies were adopted by the Board members and that the same do now constitute the policies of the Clemency and Pardons Board, and that they supersede any prior policies or resolutions adopted by the Board or its predecessors.

Dated this 11th day of July, 2025.

Rhonda Salvesen

Rhonda Salvesen, Chairperson

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