



## Montana Board of Pardons and Parole

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**Greg Gianforte, Governor**

**Steve K. Hurd, Board Chair**

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### Board of Pardons and Parole Position Request

In May 2017, Montana enacted Justice Reinvestment policies that provided a framework for the state to transition to a full-time, professional decision-making body (SB 64). This statute required the new Montana Board fully adopt paroling best practices, including structured release decision-making guidelines. As a professional board we consider how our decision-making practices can be part of a strategy for enhancing public safety and the wise use of resources. In August 2017, the Board of Pardons and Parole (BOPP), adopted and placed into use guidelines to structure and guide parole decisions and release conditions.

The BOPP is comprised of 5 full-time board members and operational staff of 5 (Total of 10). Operational staff include chief of staff, 3 administrative support and a victim/witness liaison. Our operations goal is to provide invaluable assistance in ensuring that the BOPP carry out our processes in an effective and efficient fashion while being cognizant of 2-3-201 MCA, Open Meetings. The BOPP conducted 1,287 hearings in FY 2021.

Daily major daily components include determining eligibility, scheduling hearings, coordinating with victims, witness, support witnesses, legal counsel, and prison facilities across the state. Also note, the BOPP will also review and track executive clemencies and conditional discharge from supervision cases, coordinate parole process with all entities within the Montana Department of Corrections and other correctional entities across the United States.

Since October of 2021, the BOPP has identified deficits in the framework instituted in 2018. Operations in Deer Lodge was in dire need of structure, which included updating equipment deficits, updating administrative rules, and creating policy and procedure manual. All of which was never updated after (SB 64) was passed. In addition, the chief of staff, through strategic planning, has made a concerted effort on shoring up the deficits. Statistical information was posted on the BOPP public website in November of 2021, which is the first update since FY 2017. Other updates in operations included file maintenance/storage (which encompassed clearing 18 months' worth of back filing to digital), migration to OMIS 3, website updates, statistical reporting, professional coordination and managing by fact.

Through internal reviews, customer service with victim/witness liaison has fallen short of the

BOPP's goals given all the responsibilities that encompasses in daily duties. It is important to point out this position also administers our virtual hearings with all parties while documenting all dispositional information. This can take away critical time needed in working with victims of upcoming hearings, providing support and education prior to the hearing, and supporting and debriefing after the hearing. This process also includes collaborating with other criminal justice partners, ensuring the needs and concerns of the victim are addressed, ensuring communication was made with supporting witness and legal counsel.