



Ana Yáñez-Correa  
Executive Director  
tel 512.441.8123  
cell 512.587.7010  
info@criminaljusticecoalition.org  
www.criminaljusticecoalition.org

FACT SHEET

## ASSIST FORMER OFFENDERS WHO ARE RE-INTEGRATING INTO SOCIETY

OPTIONS FOR PAROLE PANELS CAN HELP FORMER OFFENDERS BECOME RESPONSIBLE, SELF-RELIANT CITIZENS

### REFORMING THE PAROLE SYSTEM IS FUNDAMENTAL TO PREVENTING PRISON OVER-CROWDING AND IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY.

The acts of alleviating prison crowding and securing our communities are not mutually exclusive. Parole policy should be designed to assist former offenders who are re-integrating into society by enabling them to become self-sufficient, responsible working members of the community. Revoking parolees and sending them back to prison to serve lengthy sentences for what are minor and administrative offenses will only make them more hardened criminals who will find further difficulty re-integrating into society when they are re-released.

### WHAT DOES S.B. 838 DO?

S.B. 838 by Senate Criminal Justice Chairman Whitmire would afford a parole panel several options for handling cases in which individuals on parole or mandatory supervision violate a condition of their release. The bill would allow a parole panel to send a releasee to a county jail for a period 60 to 180 days, to an intermediate sanction facility for 60 days to a year, or to a substance abuse treatment facility for 180 days to a year depending on the nature and severity of the violation.

Furthermore, S.B. 838 would prohibit a parole panel from revoking a person's parole or mandatory supervision solely for an administrative violation of release conditions or for being convicted of a misdemeanor after release.

S.B. 838 would not apply to individuals paroled for sex offenses or those placed under super high-intensive supervision.

### PAROLE TERMS ARE CURRENTLY TOO LONG TO BE COST-EFFECTIVE AND TOO WEAK TO SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT PAROLEES' BEHAVIOR.

National research shows that "surveillance-oriented supervision" is ineffective. Most violators spend only 90 days in prison before returning to the community. Putting them back in prison for committing a violation does little to improve behavior in the long term.

Release policies must aim to help offenders make lasting behavioral changes, thereby better preventing recidivism. This can be best achieved through "intensive treatment-oriented supervision." Parole officers must find new ways to communicate with offenders so as to become problem-solvers rather than just reactionary paternal agents.

Currently, parole in Texas serves as a "hammer" when a parolee violates parole. But, as Kansas Secretary of Corrections Roger Werholtz, says, "When you hammer people so often, it becomes meaningless." Both the law enforcement approach and the social work approach must be incorporated into the parole system for it to be successful. Having an effective review process in place would facilitate such a compromise.

**SUPPORT S.B. 838 BY CHAIRMAN WHITMIRE**