

Board Chair's Message October 2, 2009

I am honored to have been appointed by Governor Kulongoski and confirmed by the Senate as Chair of the Oregon Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision.

As an attorney, my career spanned private practice and public service, yet it has been my work in the criminal justice system that I found to be the most energizing and rewarding. My passion is to protect Oregonians, work with victims of crime, and ensure that the criminal justice system is fair, balanced and effective.

I also recognize the power of personal change through accountability, and that inmates can be rehabilitated and return safely to our communities as productive, law abiding citizens. As a Board member, I am committed to looking at the record of the individual inmate before me, questioning that offender in depth, and making fair and unbiased decisions.

The chairperson of the Board is "first among equals," and each of our votes carries the same weight. I am honored to work with my colleagues on the Board, Vice-Chair Darcey Baker and Candace Wheeler, both experienced and capable professionals. We have a solid working relationship and are committed to continuing the important task of making the Board and its efforts more transparent and effective.

I also want to express heartfelt admiration for the leadership of outgoing Chair Vicki Walker. Vicki recognized that the September revenue forecast's drop of \$182 million and the potential for voters to overturn the tax revenue increases in January placed the Legislature's ability to fund the fourth Board member position in jeopardy; she elected to relinquish her position on the Board and move into the position of Board Administrator. As such, she will focus her vision and experience on a long list of critical projects, including finding solutions to our budget and workload issues, promulgating administrative rules, improving services to victims of crime, and creating training documents for parole and probation officers in the field.

I am excited to lead this agency of committed professionals. Our staff of 12 performs an amazing volume of work vital to the smooth operation of the public safety system. Their workload has nearly doubled since the inception of Measure 11 while the number of staff positions has actually decreased.

I am committed to working with the Governor's Office and the Legislature to continue to meet the challenges of maintaining the highest level of service to victims of crime; ensuring hearings and sanctions are timely and fair; that warrants for arrest are accurate and confirmed; and that offenders leave prison with conditions of supervision that support the Parole and Probation Officers in the field in their important work of protecting our communities.

I look forward to serving the people of Oregon in my new role.

Sincerely,

Aaron Felton, Chair