

The Honorable George Allen
Former Governor and U.S. Senator, Virginia
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Statement on Governor McAuliffe's Executive Order to Study Parole

“Every governor should periodically review policies in place in their State, and I have no issue with the Governor for doing so. When I took office in 1994, that’s exactly what I did because we knew that Virginians at that time did not feel secure in their own neighborhoods with so many crimes being committed by repeat offenders, including a woman raped by early released rapist and a police officer killed on Father's Day by a criminal on parole.

“We empaneled a Commission to study Virginia’s parole laws and to determine the best path forward to keep my promise to the people of Virginia to enact truth-in-sentencing and abolish parole completely for violent offenders. Thanks to bi-partisan support from the General Assembly, we achieved those goals and ensured convicted criminals completed at least 85 percent of their sentence, and that time served by violent criminals was increased by 100 percent and by 300-500 percent for repeat offenders. Because of our prioritization of concern for protecting law-abiding citizens and their communities, probably tens of thousands of Virginians are NOT victims of rape, murder or other violence to their loved ones.

It will be interesting to see which specific felons that this Commission thinks should be released sooner, I doubt that most jurors, dedicated law officers, judges, victims and their families want to revert to the dangerously lenient, dishonest system of early release. And, there's a real societal cost to crime that this Commission should consider, and they should avoid sanctimonious, blissful wishing away of the principle of holding criminals personally responsibility for their acts.

Virginia should move cautiously in making changes to our successful Parole Abolition initiative that has reduced violent crimes and resulted in a slowing of the rate of incarceration and an increase in the number of violent offenders in prison versus non-violent offenders. A report to the Senate Finance Committee just 7 months ago confirmed the success of Parole Abolition for violent criminals.

Virginia Performs indicates that the Commonwealth has remained well below the national property crime average for over a decade, and we rank 8th lowest in the country. When Governor McAuliffe was elected, Virginia had the third lowest violent crime rate in the nation. Those are positive results of our public safety

reforms and there should be no backtracking. Unsafe communities are obviously bad for the people and families residing therein; it also is difficult to attract economic development in more dangerous jurisdictions.

The Virginia Sentencing Commission reviews sentencing guidelines and makes recommendations for changes based upon experience. This process has worked well for nearly 20 years. I encourage the Governor and members of his commission to carefully approach any consideration of re-instituting parole so that Virginia does not reverse direction and return to the days of violent felons serving as little as 1/4 of their sentences, many who committed their next violent crime upon their early release.

There are incentives for convicted felons to improve themselves in prison; for example, earning a GED. A felon can reduce his sentence by up to 15% by such positive behavior. But, the convicted felon will serve 85% of their sentence. That's why it's called TRUTH in Sentencing.