



STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES **ANNUAL REPORT FY 2024**





We are enhancing public safety

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The Agency is guided by the 4E’s

Engaging Stakeholders

Educating the Community

Encouraging Active Participation

Enhancing Operations

OUR MISSION

To serve the citizens of Georgia by exercising the constitutional authority of executive clemency through informed decision-making, thereby ensuring public safety, protecting victims’ rights, and providing offenders with opportunities for positive change.

OUR VISION

To be the nation’s most effective and efficient executive clemency authority by:

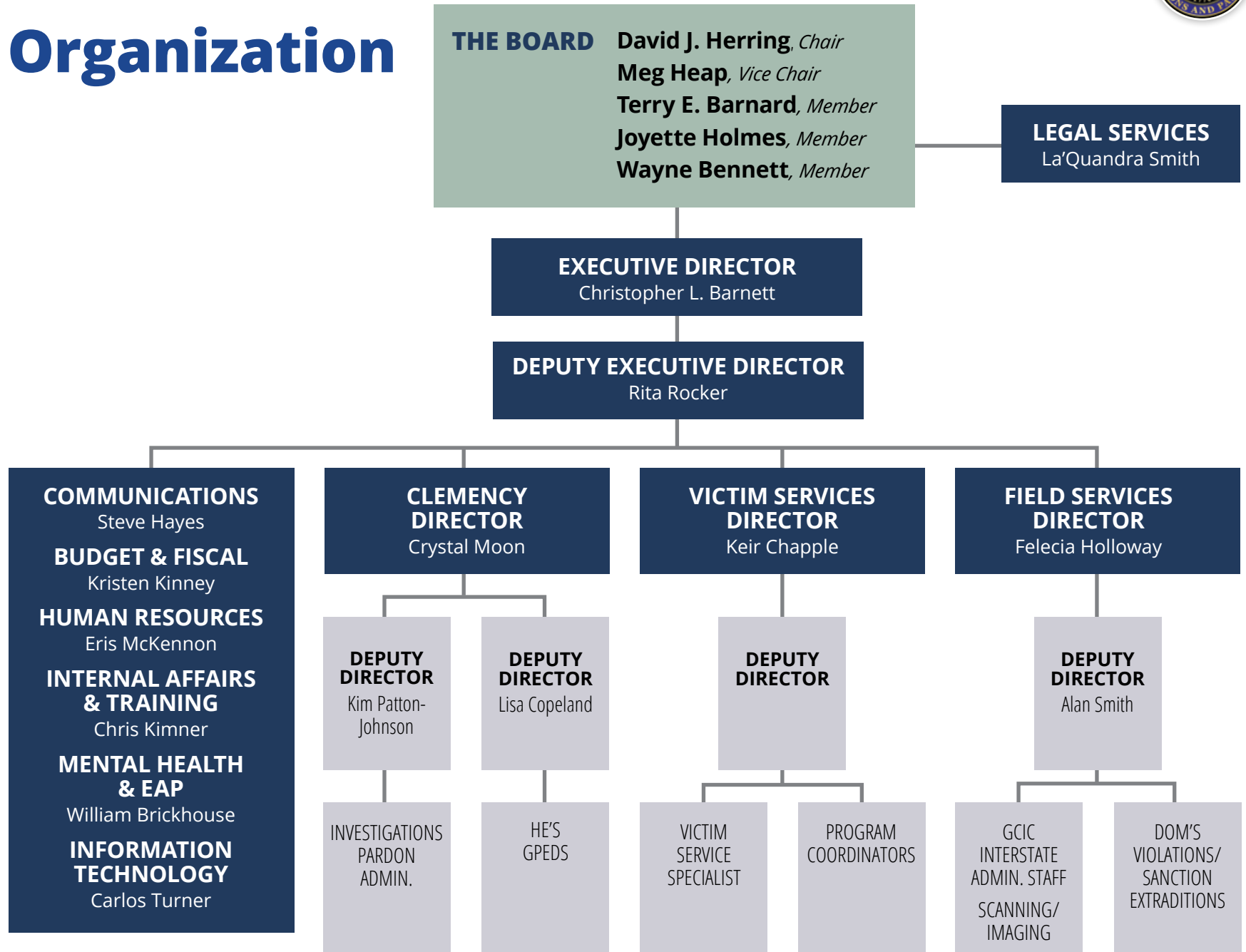
- Making informed, scientific, data-driven clemency decisions based in constitutional authority and guided by applicable state law
- Preparing offenders for positive change through the imposition of practical and constructive pre and post release conditions
- Protecting the public and creating safer communities by holding accountable those offenders who violate the conditions of release
- Ensuring crime victims have a voice in the post-conviction criminal justice process
- Fostering partnerships and positive relationships with all stakeholders
- Engaging, educating, and encouraging the active participation of all stakeholders in the clemency decision-making process
- Striving to be a continuously learning public safety organization

OUR VALUES

We value Ethics, Integrity, Equity and Innovation.



Organization



Highlights from FY 2024



Board Selects New Chair and Vice Chair for Fiscal Year 2025

At the June 2024 operational meeting, the five-member Georgia Parole Board selected David J. Herring to serve as chairman for Fiscal Year 2025. Herring will serve the one-year term through June 30, 2025. Prior to his appointment to the Board in 2018, Herring served as a state trooper, and as a Lt. Colonel with the Georgia Department of Public Safety, he managed the security details for the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, and Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice.

Meg Heap is Vice Chair for FY 2025. Heap, a former prosecutor from Savannah was appointed to the Georgia Parole Board in January of 2021. She served as a victim advocate as she started her career in public service.

"Thank you for this opportunity. I do not take this opportunity lightly. I appreciate the position that I am being given. I can promise you this, like I have always done, I will serve this board with hard work and integrity whether I am the chairman or not."

— David Herring, Chairman

New Board Members Appointed

The State Board of Pardons and Paroles welcomed two new Board Members during the fiscal year. Governor Brian Kemp appointed Joyette Holmes to serve a seven-year term. Holmes was appointed in January of 2024. Holmes began her career as a Defense Attorney in the District Courts of Baltimore County, Maryland. She has served as the Chief Magistrate Judge for Cobb County, as an Assistant District Attorney, and as an Assistant Solicitor General.



"I am grateful as well to the Governor for the appointment, grateful for him believing me to be a good addition to this board and to this team that does so much work across the state."

— Joyette Holmes, Board Member

In March, Wayne Bennett was appointed to the Board by Governor Kemp. Bennett is the former sheriff of Glynn County, where he served for twenty years. Bennett began his career in law enforcement with the Glynn County Police Department in 1978, holding numerous positions, including Commander of the Criminal Investigative Division, Patrol Division Supervisor, and Team Leader of the Special Operations Response Team.



"I am honored to serve at the request of Governor Kemp. These first few days have been a tremendous learning experience, and I've realized that the employees of this agency are truly dedicated to their roles and to doing their part for public safety."

— Wayne Bennett, Board Member



Criminal Justice and Public Safety Engagement Increases in FY 2024

During the fiscal year, an increased focus was placed on collaboration with stakeholders, criminal justice and public safety partners and the community. Parole Board Members and agency staff consistently engaged and educated these groups while encouraging active participation in the parole process.

Law enforcement engagement included presentations to Districts 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11 of the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. The Georgia Sheriffs' Association, Council of Superior Court Judges, Prosecuting Attorneys' Council, Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the Georgia Public Defender Council were among groups the agency engaged.

Constituent and community engagement included visits and presentations to Georgia schools, from elementary to college, in an effort to introduce the next generations to parole and introduce the state's criminal justice system through positive interactions.

In FY 2024, the agency continued collaborations with state agencies and organizations to include the Governor's Office, Lt. Governor's Office, the Georgia General Assembly, Attorney General, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Commission on Family Violence and critical stakeholders and partners, the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) and Georgia Department of Community Supervision. Through GDC, offenders continued to be actively engaged and educated regarding being "parole ready."

"Everyone is a stakeholder in the parole process."

— Executive Director Chris Barnett



Crime Victims Engaged in FY 2024

Georgia's crime victims remained a top priority for the State Board of Pardons and Paroles in FY 2024. Services are provided through the Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS), a division of the agency. GOVS also represents and is supported by the Georgia Department of Corrections and the Georgia Department of Community Supervision. Crime Victims receive post-conviction services, and the Parole Board Members remain informed regarding victim input into parole eligible cases.

Again, in FY 2024, Victim Impact Sessions (VIS) provided crime victims with direct in-person meetings with Parole Board Members. Victim input at the VIS is included in the case file of the offender for the Board Members to review at the time of parole consideration. Meetings with crime victims in FY 2024 were held across the state.

Read more about Victim Impact Sessions on page 32 of this report.

"I am grateful to these victims for agreeing to meet today. These victims are making their voices heard and becoming a necessary part of the parole decision-making process."

— Board Chair David Herring

"As a victim advocate early in my career, I know that the impact is very real on the victim. I am thankful, although painful for them, that these victims decided to meet with us in Albany."

— Board Vice Chair Meg Heap





Board Celebrates 80 Years of Informed Parole Decisions for Public Safety

The State Board of Pardons and Paroles celebrated 80 years as former Board Members and employees joined current staff at the State Capitol where the first parole board meetings were held. “Enhancing Public Safety through Informed Clemency Decisions, 1943-2023,” was the theme at the operational Parole Board meeting held December 6, 2023. The ceremony included remarks by Board Members who served during five different decades. A brief documentary video was produced depicting how the agency has progressed over the last several decades.

“The work of our predecessors set the foundation for our operations today. From implementing guidelines to transitioning to electronic processes, past board members, leadership and agency staff have served ethically and with integrity to serve Georgians and enhance public safety.”

— Executive Director of Parole Chris Barnett

Pardon Process is Fully Automated in Fiscal Year 2024

Requirements to download, print, complete and then mail Georgia’s pardon application are no longer necessary as the Georgia Parole Board’s new electronic filing system became active in FY 2024. Applicants now complete an electronic application and E-file. The Board’s Clemency Division implemented the new system starting in January 2024. The new system will result in a more efficient pardon application filing and voting process.

Georgia Parole Training Presentations Delivered in Fiscal Year 2024

The State Board of Pardons and Paroles delivered several presentations to groups explaining Georgia’s parole decision making processes and the agency’s operations. At the Association of Paroling Authorities International Conference staff conducted a workshop for attendees titled, “Enhancing Clemency Decision Making Through Effective Community Partnerships.” Georgia Parole Board Chairman David Herring and member Joyette Holmes were among the Georgia staff speaking to U.S. and international parole leaders.

“The clemency and parole decision-making process in Georgia is unique and proven, and our staff delivered an excellent presentation. It’s because of our parole staff that as board members we can make informed scientific decisions in the interest of public safety.”

– David Herring, Chairman

The Parole Board’s Clemency Division leadership conducted training sessions at national conferences in FY 2024. At the American Correctional Association’s (ACA) Winter Conference in Maryland, agency staff participated in a presentation with the Georgia Department of Corrections’ Office of Health Services (OHS) describing compassionate releases.

The Georgia Parole Board’s Clemency Division presented at the 48th American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) Annual Training Institute in New York City. Clemency joined Georgia Department of Corrections’ staff in presenting information about incarcerated females who had suffered continued domestic violence.



Letter

FROM THE CHAIR

To: The Honorable Brian Kemp, Governor, Members of the General Assembly, and Citizens of the state of Georgia

As the elected Chairman of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, it is my honor to serve the citizens of Georgia for Fiscal Year 2025. The trust placed in me by my colleagues on the Parole Board is not taken lightly. That being said, the title does not affect my dedication and commitment to the people of Georgia as I complete the day-to-day responsibilities invested in me as a parole board member by the state constitution. Despite a title, I believe I can speak for each member of the Georgia Parole Board when I say, individually and collectively, we make executive clemency decisions to the best of our ability, utilizing all available resources, information, and assessment tools, with the safety of our communities as our mission. As we make decisions, we also work to make the best decisions regarding the offenders. Decisions that will provide offenders with the greatest opportunities for success.

One thing I know however is that without our workforce, our employees, as board members we could not come close to being successful in making the best decisions and affecting public safety in a positive way. I will always give credit where credit is due. The employees make this agency successful. Our small, dedicated workforce is made up of 179 individuals who all have important roles they must excel at in order to support the board's decisions. They exceed at their jobs as they did this past fiscal year. Here is how.

For the past fiscal year, this agency again placed among the nation's highest rate of successful parole completions, exceeding a 70% mark again. Meanwhile, the national average for FY 2024 was an estimated 60%. The agency's Clemency, Field Services, and Victim Services staff are responsible for collecting and providing the board with information regarding offenders. Their work and relationships with our stakeholders and criminal justice partners remain a necessity for the board. Again, in FY 2024, our contacts with law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, victims, the public, agencies, and organizations benefited the board and helped enhance our operations and improve the decision-making process. Those stakeholders and partners include the two most closely related to our mission, the Georgia Department of Corrections, and the Georgia Department of Community Supervision. We are constantly looking for ways to improve how we work together, share information, and seek higher success for offender reentry.

It is my sincere hope that you will take time to review our report that details the fine work of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, specifically the efforts and production of our dedicated workforce.

Sincerely,

David J. Herring

Chairman, State Board of Pardons and Paroles





The Five Member Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles

The Georgia Constitution provides that Parole Board Members are to be appointed by the Governor to seven-year staggered terms, subject to confirmation by the State Senate. Board Members are full-time state employees from various professions including criminal justice and private business. In 1943, the Board was established through a constitutional amendment and consisted of three members. In 1973, as the prison population rose to 9,000, the Constitution was amended to increase the Board to five members. Today, with an inmate population at approximately 50,000, the Board still consists of five voting members.

The Board is the sole authority in the state to make informed decisions regarding which state inmates should be paroled, thereby ensuring that the state's prison beds are dedicated to the offenders who have committed the most serious crimes. In Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), through the Board's executive clemency authority, 5,443 offenders were released from prison to serve the remainder of their prison sentence on parole. Georgia's percentage of parolees successfully completing parole in FY24 was 72%. The national average was estimated to be approximately 60%. The Board's authority includes granting paroles, pardons, and commutations including death sentences. Deciding whether to grant an offender parole is the primary responsibility of the Board. Parole hearings are not held. However, each offender entering the Georgia prison system is interviewed by parole staff. The Board also actively solicits input and accepts pleas for and protests of clemency throughout the consideration process. Information from community stakeholders, including victims, the public and criminal justice

partners, is considered by the Board. The Board Members have discretion to determine who receives clemency. The total number of parole eligible offender cases considered by the Board Members during the fiscal year was 19,328. The Board's decision may be for the offender to receive a tentative parole month which is a future possible release from prison, an immediate release or parole may be denied. In most cases, if granted, the offender receives a tentative parole month (TPM) which is a future possible parole release. Please read more about the parole process in the Clemency section of this report.

Board Members are required to make many decisions regarding each parole case. Not only is a majority of three votes required to grant or deny parole, but other votes may also be required for each individual parole case. For example, the Board may add preconditions to parole which require each member to vote. In FY24, the five Board Members made a total of 69,375 votes. Again, the total represents all Board decisions requiring a vote and multiple votes or decisions for each offender case during the fiscal year.

Guidelines are applied to cases

In most cases, the Board's Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System is applied which includes a time-to-serve recommendation. Board Members review the comprehensive case file of each offender, and each member individually makes a parole decision. Although the guidelines are not applied to life sentence reviews, the Board maintains a comprehensive parole file in each case and the members review each case thoroughly before voting to grant or deny parole.



FY24

CLEMENCY VOTES

69,375

INMATE CASES CONSIDERED

19,328

PAROLEES WHO SUCCESSFULLY
COMPLETED PAROLE

72%

OFFENDERS RELEASED BY
PAROLE FROM GEORGIA
PRISONS IN FY24

5,443

The Board's decision process is evidence-based, scientific and data-driven.

Death Sentences

The review of death sentences is a responsibility of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. The Board is the only entity in Georgia with the constitutional authority to commute a death sentence. The Governor does not have this authority in Georgia. Board Members conduct a clemency meeting for the condemned inmate after which they may commute a death sentence to life with or without the possibility of parole, issue a stay or deny clemency.

Monthly Board Meetings

The Board conducts monthly Parole Board Meetings at which policy changes are considered and operational updates are provided. Offender cases are not discussed, and parole decisions are not made at the monthly Board Meetings. Learn more about the clemency process beginning on page 18.

Constitution and History

Checks and Balances

Georgia's constitution provides for three branches of government to serve as checks and balances on the power of government over the offender. The legislative branch sets the minimum and maximum range of the prison sentence, the judicial branch sentences the offender within that range, and the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, as a part of the executive branch, manages the finite resource of state prison beds by considering eligible offenders and making parole grants in the interest of public safety.

History of Parole in Georgia

Parole came to Georgia in 1908 when the General Assembly voted to give the Prison Commission authority to implement a system of "parole or conditional pardons." Parole could be granted upon the approval of the full Commission and the Governor. The Commission had power to issue warrants and arrest parole violators. In 1938, the Commission was given broad powers to grant paroles without the approval of the Governor and without limitation on its authority, "save the welfare of the State." However, the Commission remained hampered by a shortage of funds. Then in the early 1940s there were significant questions raised about the handling of pardons. The General Assembly passed legislation and it was signed into law in February of 1943, creating the State Board of Pardons and Paroles as an independent agency to administer executive clemency. In August of 1943, Georgia voters ratified, by a ratio of four and a half to one, a landmark amendment to the State Constitution establishing the State Board of Pardons and Paroles as an independent agency authorized to grant paroles, pardons, reprieves, commute sentences, including death sentences, and remove disabilities imposed by law.



PAROLE BOARD MEMBERS

DAVID J. HERRING, *Chair*

David J. Herring serves as Chairman of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles for FY 2025. He was elected by his colleagues on the Board to serve from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, as chairman. Mr. Herring previously served as vice chair of the Parole Board. As chairman, he serves on the Board of Community Supervision which has regulatory oversight of the Department of Community Supervision.



Mr. Herring was appointed to the Parole Board on August 1, 2018, by Governor Deal. He joined the Georgia Department of Public Safety in 1994 as a state trooper and has served the state of Georgia for over twenty-nine years.

During his tenure with the Department of Public Safety, Mr. Herring served as team security for the University of Georgia Football Program and served as a member of the state of Georgia S.W.A.T. Team and prior to his Board appointment, as a Lt. Colonel managing security details for the offices of Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House and Chief Justice. Mr. Herring received the Governor's Public Safety Award for Heroism in 2001 and was recognized by the Gainesville Kiwanis Club as Trooper of the Year in 2004. He is a member of the 2014 Leadership Georgia Class. Mr. Herring graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in public administration. Mr. Herring and his wife reside in Hall County and are members of their local church.



MEG HEAP, *Vice Chair*

Meg Heap was elected by the Board Members to serve as Vice Chair of the Parole Board for Fiscal Year 2025. Governor Brian Kemp appointed Mrs. Heap to the Board in January of 2021. She is the former District Attorney for Georgia's Eastern Judicial Circuit.

Mrs. Heap began her career as a volunteer coordinator and victim advocate with the Victim-Witness Assistance Program in the Savannah District Attorney's Office. After graduating from law school, Mrs. Heap went on to serve the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit as an assistant district attorney where she prosecuted felonies in Superior and Juvenile Court and oversaw civil condemnation. In 1995, Mrs.

Heap began work as an assistant district attorney in Chatham County handling State Court Division misdemeanor cases, moving to Superior Court and felony cases in 1997. At the end of 2005, she was assigned to elder and disabled adult abuse cases, becoming the first such prosecutor in the state. She served as chief assistant district attorney from 2009 to the fall of 2010 before briefly leaving the office for private practice. In 2012, Mrs. Heap was elected district attorney for the Eastern Judicial Circuit (Chatham County) where she served two terms.

Mrs. Heap is a past president of the District Attorneys' Association of Georgia and was named the 2019 District Attorney of the Year. She serves on the Georgia State Bar Code Revision Commission and is a past member of the Georgia State Judicial Nominating Commission. She previously served on the Executive Committee for Duffie Stone, the 2019-2020 President of the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) and served as the Chair of the Best Practices Committee for the NDAA. In 2023, Mrs. Heap received special recognition from the National Organization of Parents Of Murdered Children (POMC), being named the POMC Dr. Robert Aranosian Award recipient.

Meg Heap is from Savannah and is a graduate of St. Vincent's Academy. She graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Georgia Southern University and obtained her Juris Doctorate from Mercer University.



PAROLE BOARD MEMBERS *CONTINUED*

Terry E. Barnard, *Member*

Terry E. Barnard is the Board's second longest serving chair in its 80-year history. He served the Board as chairman from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2017, and then from July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2024. Mr. Barnard has been appointed to two full terms of seven years each, joining the Board in 2010 to complete an unexpired term.

Mr. Barnard is a former State Representative, serving nearly sixteen years in the Georgia House of Representatives. The Coastal Georgia lawmaker served as a member of several key House Committees, including the State Institutions and Property Committee, where he served as the Chair for six years. In 1995-1996, Mr. Barnard guided through the Georgia House the framework for the State Sex Offender Registry and Sexual Offender Registration Review Board.

The Board has made many enhancements during Mr. Barnard's tenure on the Board. Enhancements to stakeholder notifications, the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System and victim input into Board decisions are included.

Mr. Barnard is a native of Tattnall County and lives in McIntosh County. He is a graduate of Atlantic Community College and has a strong background in business and more than eighteen years of experience in the financial industry. He participates in a local Baptist Church and takes part in many community events and activities.



Joyette Holmes, *Member*

Joyette Holmes was appointed by Governor Brian Kemp in January of 2024 to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Mrs. Holmes started her career as a Public Defender in Baltimore County, Maryland, before returning to Georgia and serving as an Assistant Solicitor General. She later opened the Law Office of Joyette M. Holmes. She left private practice to serve as an Assistant District Attorney in Cobb County and as the Chief Magistrate Judge for the Cobb Judicial Circuit in 2015. During this time, Mrs. Holmes also served as the Vice President of the Council of Magistrate Court Judges and served on the Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice's Commission on Sexual Harassment in the Judiciary.

In 2019, Governor Kemp appointed Mrs. Holmes as Cobb County District Attorney. She is the first African American and woman to serve as both Chief Magistrate Judge and District Attorney in Cobb County. Respected and due to her reputation to reach just outcomes, Georgia's Attorney General selected Holmes to serve as the special prosecutor for the Ahmaud Arbery case. Prior to the Parole Board appointment, Mrs. Holmes served as a partner in a Marietta law firm.

Mrs. Holmes is highly active in her community and has made public and community service a priority. She has received numerous honors for her public service including awards named for her mentor, Retired Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham and her legal hero, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Mrs. Holmes is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and currently serves on the boards of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, MUST Ministries, Kennestone Regional Hospital Board, and the Capital City Bank Board.

Joyette Holmes was born and raised in Valdosta, Georgia. She earned her undergraduate degrees in Psychology and Criminal Justice from the University of Georgia. Mrs. Holmes earned her Juris Doctorate from the University of Baltimore School of Law. Joyette and Bridges Holmes have been married for more than twenty years. They have two daughters.



PAROLE BOARD MEMBERS *CONTINUED*

Wayne Bennett, *Member*

Wayne V. Bennett was appointed to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles by Governor Brian Kemp in March of 2024. Mr. Bennett is the first former Georgia sheriff to be appointed to the Parole Board.

Mr. Bennett served as sheriff of Glynn County from 1992 to 2012, retiring from the office. As sheriff, he was responsible for the operations of a 600-capacity correctional facility. During his tenure as sheriff, Mr. Bennett served on the Executive Committee for the G8 Summit in 2004, served on Presidential Security Teams for Presidents Jimmy Carter, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush. He served as an advisory board member of the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Council. From 1978 to 1992, Mr. Bennett served with the Glynn County Police Department. He served as Patrol Division Supervisor, Commander of the Criminal Investigative Division, supervised Internal Affairs/Professional Standards, and supervised Task Force Operations. Mr. Bennett graduated from the 152nd session of the FBI National Academy. He served in the U.S. Army from 1974 to 1978. Following retirement, he worked as a consultant. Mr. Bennett has a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and Public Administration from Liberty University.

Mr. Bennett is active in his community and has served on several boards and groups to include the Glynn County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Glynn County Police Advisory Panel, Chamber of Commerce, and Leadership Glynn 12 Month Fellowship. He is a member of his local church.





EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Christopher Barnett

Executive Director of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles

Executive Director Christopher Barnett was appointed to the position in August of 2015 after serving as Interim Director and guiding the Board through a significant reorganization as parole supervision transitioned to the new Department of Community Supervision. Director Barnett's focus remains on strengthening professional relationships with community stakeholders and criminal justice partners and he continues to inform Georgians about the parole consideration process. Director Barnett joined the Georgia Parole Board in 2003 as a parole officer in the Marietta Parole District. Promotions to senior parole officer, assistant chief parole officer, field operations officer, senior field operations officer and statewide program manager followed. In May of 2013, he was promoted to regional director, supervising all operations and parole districts within the Northeast Region. Mr. Barnett is a native of Hinesville, Georgia. He has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a Master of Public Administration from Georgia Southern University.



Rita Rocker

Deputy Executive Director

Rita Rocker was appointed Deputy Executive Director on June 1, 2015. She served as the Director of the Georgia Office of Victim Services from September of 2020 until June 30, 2024. Ms. Rocker began her career in 1989 as an accounting clerk with the Engineering Unit of the Georgia Department of Corrections. She then worked in the Food & Farm Unit, before being promoted to unit Manager of the Property/Inventory and Audits Unit. In 1997, Ms. Rocker transferred to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles as an operations auditor with responsibilities to examine each of the Board's primary operations identifying areas for improvement. Her success resulted in a promotion to unit manager. In 2010, she was promoted to Director of Government Relations, leading the Board through several legislative cycles as criminal justice reforms were implemented in Georgia. Ms. Rocker graduated from Georgia Southern University with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance. She later attended the Georgia Law Enforcement Command College at Columbus State University earning a Master of Public Administration.



Letter

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It has been my great privilege to serve the people of Georgia as Executive Director of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles in FY 2024, leading the daily work that drives our mission forward.

Our agency's operational efforts remain focused on improving processes in order to enhance the Board's operations and fulfill our critical criminal justice role. Our primary goal remains clear: to positively impact public safety across Georgia.

We have dedicated and committed employees who embrace their critical individual roles, which collectively result in success as an agency. By embracing the advancements of today's rapidly evolving world, we ensure our team receives ongoing training in the latest technologies, equipping them to operate efficiently and effectively.

We are seizing this opportunity. For years, the world has been moving away from paper and toward electronic methods of completing processes. In FY 2024, we reached an important milestone by fully automating the Board's pardon and restoration of rights application process. It is now a more effective and efficient application that benefits former offenders who have been contributing members of society and who can be even more successful contributors by receiving this type of clemency from the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles.

As a criminal justice agency, we recognize that we must collaborate closely with our stakeholders in order to be successful and enhance public safety. Our operational priorities are our 4Es; Engaging Stakeholders, Educating Communities, Encouraging Active Participation in the Parole Process and Enhancing Operations. We actively seek to include all stakeholders in these operational priorities. By engaging law enforcement, judges, attorneys, prosecutors, victims, government agencies, civic organizations, and the public, we are seeking to enhance our operations and improve public safety. The collaborative efforts are paying off. Today more than at any time in the past, our agency collaborated with stakeholders to improve communication, processes, and at the end of the day, public safety.

In FY 2024, our agency partnered with the Criminal Data Exchange (CDX) Board, Georgia Crime Information Center, Governor's Office, and State Legislature to centralize the GCIC disposition process. The Georgia Parole Board is focused on partnerships that help expand the effort of Georgia criminal justice agencies in sharing data, making each contributing agency more effective and efficient and therefore resulting in Georgia being the number one state to live, work and raise a family.

In FY 2024, in an effort to better serve public safety, the Board revalidated its Guidelines Rating

System and Sex Offender Risk Assessment Tool and expanded the electronic notifications and solicitation processes.

In FY 2024, our Clemency, Field Services and Victim Services Divisions increased contacts with local police through the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP) by presenting information about parole to six different GACP Districts. Other law enforcement contacts included the Georgia Sheriffs' Association and meetings with individual sheriffs across the state. In FY 2024, we engaged the Georgia Gang Investigators Association, and the Immigration, Customs and Enforcement (ICE) agency. It remains essential that the parole board work hand-in-hand with law enforcement to ensure we provide each other with information, making us more successful in ensuring our communities remain safe. Also, during the fiscal year, we maintained and increased communication and engagement with our judges, and attorneys representing offenders as well as prosecutors. These continuous efforts ensure our board is fully informed regarding offender cases during the parole consideration process.

Victim engagement was again increased during the fiscal year as more Victim Impact Sessions were conducted allowing victims direct in-person access to the parole board members. Information from victims is very important to the board members when making parole decisions.



Through our engagement with the public, we are seeking to engage, educate, and encourage participation of our community members in the parole process. In FY 2024, we exhausted every opportunity to attend and distribute information about the Georgia Parole Board.

We are engaging our youth. During the fiscal year, parole staff visited youth in schools, and we sought to provide our leaders of tomorrow with information as we engaged college-aged students on campus and at career fairs.

In FY 2024, the Board again achieved a greater than 70% (72%) parole success rate, significantly above the national average. This success is a testament to the informed decision-making process we have established, grounded in thorough case analysis and stakeholder collaboration.

As we look toward the future, we remain committed to elevating public safety, driven by innovation and efficient, purposeful operations. Fiscal Year 2024 was a year of excellence for the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, underscoring our leadership among paroling authorities both nationally and internationally. We look forward with anticipation to the programs and innovations on the horizon for FY 2025.

Chris Barnett
Executive Director



Clemency/Parole Consideration

Clemency / Parole Consideration / FY 2024

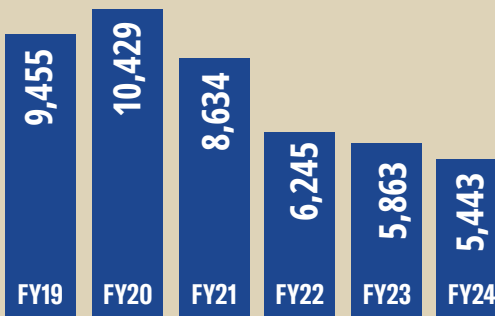
In Georgia, clemency encompasses the parole decision making process. Clemency also pertains to the granting or denying of pardons and restoration of civil and political rights by the Parole Board. In Georgia, the Parole Board holds the sole constitutional authority to grant executive clemency to a condemned inmate. An inmate is not entitled to parole, however, by law; most are eligible for consideration and therefore must be considered by the Parole Board. As a result of data-driven parole decisions, Georgia's scientific parole consideration process keeps the public safe and assists the Department of Corrections in keeping the finite number of prison beds dedicated for the most serious offenders. The annual estimated cost avoidance to the state, due to offenders being under parole supervision as opposed to housing them in a state prison, was more than 343 million dollars for FY24.

Parole Consideration and Decisions

Parole Board Members independently reach their decisions after reviewing a comprehensive electronic case file on the eligible offender. The file includes investigative reports, reports from the Department of Corrections, the offender's criminal history, circumstances of current offenses, information from the district attorney, victims, and other stakeholders. The Clemency Division provides a thorough assessment and a recommended number of months-to-serve based upon the application of the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System, if applicable. (Information contained in the parole case file can be found on page 19 of this report.)

FY19-FY24

PAROLE RELEASES



Parole releases decreased during FY24. During FY24, the Parole Board released 5,443 offenders from prison. This total represented 420 fewer parole board-initiated releases from the previous fiscal year.

Eligible inmates are automatically considered for parole. Three of the five board members must agree on a decision. In FY24, there were 16,972 offender files initiated for consideration by the Clemency Division. For more information about parole eligibility and the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System visit: <https://pap.georgia.gov>.

GPEDS Electronic Case Management

The process of preparing a case for consideration by the Board is completed electronically in GPEDS (Georgia Parole Evidence-based Data System). GPEDS is effective and efficient allowing Board Members to access the offender's case material and make clemency decisions electronically. The Parole Board has eliminated the production of paper files and continues imaging remaining paper files. The agency has completed the process of submitting life-sentenced inmate cases to the Board electroni-

cally. By eliminating paper files on these cases and submitting them electronically, the Clemency Division's process is more efficient. Now all parole eligible inmate cases in Georgia may be voted electronically by the Board. GPEDS has significantly improved the agency's business processes. The electronic case file is established in GPEDS after the sentence package is electronically received from the Department of Corrections. Electronic notifications trigger actions moving the case toward a Board decision. GPEDS generates notifications to judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement regarding clemency actions pending on parole eligible offender cases. Notifications are also generated to wardens and inmates regarding Board decisions. For FY24, 41,271 notifications (all types) were generated by GPEDS. Please see additional information regarding statutory and other notifications made by the Board later in this report. There were 2,404 preconditions to parole imposed by the Board on inmates during the fiscal year.

The Parole Consideration Process

After the agency receives an offender's sentencing information electronically from the Department of Corrections, parole investigators collect details of conviction offenses, interview inmates for personal history statements and complete post sentence investigations. For cases requiring a Tentative Parole Month (TPM) decision, what is referred to as a guidelines case, hearing examiners review the information contained in the investigations conducted by parole investigators. To make equitable recommendations to the Board Members, hearing examiners process and prepare rating summaries utilizing the agency's Parole Decision Guidelines



Rating System. Following the hearing examiner's review, the cases and recommendations are electronically forwarded to the Board Members for consideration. Board Members then individually consider each case and vote electronically. The members may agree with the time-to-serve recommendation provided by the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System, or they may deviate from the recommendation by increasing or decreasing the number of months to be served before parole is granted. The Board also has the authority to deny parole.

Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System

When considering parole for those offenders who will become statutorily eligible for parole consideration and who are serving less than a life sentence, the Board reviews a recommendation of months, or a percentage of the sentence to serve. This recommendation is obtained from the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating

What Information Is Considered When Determining Who Gets Paroled?

In a guidelines case, the recommendation is derived from application of the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System regarding the time the offender should serve prior to parole or if the offender should be denied parole and serve the entire prison sentence. The Board considers the recommendation and decides whether to agree. Because the Board has

constitutional authority and discretion to determine parole, the following is information that may be in the parole file that the Board Members can consider when determining if an eligible inmate receives parole:

- ▶ aggravating circumstances
- ▶ victim impact statements
- ▶ prosecutor/judicial statements
- ▶ legal investigations including details and circumstances of the crime(s)
- ▶ the parole guidelines recommendation, if applicable
- ▶ inmate progress reports
- ▶ inmate interviews
- ▶ program completions/failures
- ▶ prison conduct
- ▶ inmate disciplinary reports
- ▶ amount of the prison sentence served

- ▶ inmate's mental health status and progress
- ▶ if probation is to be served after confinement
- ▶ offender's age at the crime commit date
- ▶ prior parole considerations
- ▶ number of prior arrests
- ▶ number of prior felonies
- ▶ prior revocations
- ▶ prior incarcerations
- ▶ personal history statement
- ▶ parole release plan

Many documents in the parole file on the offender are public. They may include (if applicable to the offender) but are not limited to:

- ▶ sentencing documents
- ▶ notifications to the offender regarding the Board's decision
- ▶ notice of consideration for parole prior to serving one-third of the sentence (only if applicable)
- ▶ notice of the final decision to parole
- ▶ correspondence sent by the Board in response to an offender's correspondence or in response to correspondence sent on behalf of the offender
- ▶ parole certificate
- ▶ notice of the preliminary revocation hearing
- ▶ the preliminary hearing summary
- ▶ the waiver of the preliminary revocation hearing

- ▶ notice of the final revocation hearing
- ▶ the waiver of the final revocation hearing
- ▶ revocation orders
- ▶ the public portion of the revocation hearing recording
- ▶ court production orders
- ▶ detainers
- ▶ subpoenas
- ▶ Board arrest warrants
- ▶ the certificate of discharge from parole
- ▶ the pardon order
- ▶ restoration of political and civil rights order
- ▶ commutation order
- ▶ Board orders in death penalty cases

Documents protected by Georgia law from public disclosure include but are not limited to:

- ▶ victim correspondence
- ▶ the offender's medical information
- ▶ GCIC/NCIC reports
- ▶ the hearing examiner's executive summary of the offender's case
- ▶ the Board ballot
- ▶ the offender's residence plan verification
- ▶ correspondence to the Board including from those opposing parole for the offender
- ▶ parole investigations
- ▶ pardon application
- ▶ petition for commutation of a death sentence



System or the guidelines. The guidelines account for the severity of the crime and the offender’s risk to reoffend. The offender’s risk to reoffend is determined by weighted factors concerning the offender’s criminal and social history that the Board has found to have value in predicting the probability of further criminal behavior. The guidelines were most recently updated by the Parole Board with changes taking effect July 1, 2023. The Board changed the crime severity level for the offenses of criminal street gang activity and arson 1. The offense of criminal street gang activity was raised from a level five to level eight. Arson 1 was changed from a level five to a level six. The Board also amended the weights of the risk factors for male and female offenders and added a factor regarding females. The higher the crime severity level, the more serious the offense, and the more likely it will be recommended that the offender serve a longer period prior to parole. More information regarding the Board’s application of the current Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System can be found at <https://pap.georgia.gov/parole-consideration/parole-consideration-eligibility-guidelines>.

Tentative Parole Months (excludes inmates serving life with parole eligibility)

After receiving the case from the hearing examiner, a Tentative Parole Month (TPM) is set when three of the five board members agree on a specific amount of time that the offender should serve before being granted parole. Inmates receive written notification of the Board’s decision. The Tentative Parole Month or “tentative grant” can be rescinded at any time. The TPM is not a release date or a final parole release decision. An inmate’s TPM status is available on the agency’s

website. The Inmate TPM Lookup (Offender/ Inmate Parole Status) link is located on the home page at <https://pap.georgia.gov>.

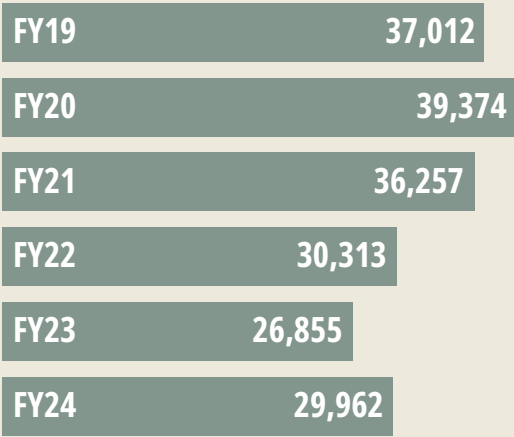
Georgia Department of Corrections’ Performance Incentive Credit (PIC) Program

The Georgia Department of Corrections operates an inmate Performance Incentive Credit (PIC) program. By completing rehabilitative programming while incarcerated, state inmates can work toward an earlier possible parole release. The Parole Board determines which parole eligible inmates who have earned PIC may be allowed an earlier release on parole. The PIC program prepares offenders for success after release and assists the state in better utilization of prison beds at a cost savings to taxpayers. Inmates deemed eligible by the Department of Corrections for the PIC program may have their TPM (Tentative Parole Month) advanced a few months by completing educational, vocational, treatment programs and work details during their incarceration. The Parole Board Members have discretion to determine if an inmate who has earned PIC through program completions will have his/her established TPM moved to an earlier date. If the Board grants earned PIC to an inmate, the TPM is updated and the process toward a final release decision continues. In FY24, the Parole Board members granted 29,962 PIC or PIC points to state inmates who had earned them by completing specific programming and work details. Each PIC point equals one month that a TPM can be changed to an earlier date.

Final Review Process

As the TPM approaches, the hearing examiner will conduct a final review of the offender’s case file. The final review determines if there is any reason

**FY19-FY24
PICs Awarded**



a release date should not be set. Parole could be delayed or denied because of the offender not completing required programming, prison misconduct, or because of detainers, warrants or new sentences. A release date that is set can be rescinded at any time prior to the release.

Statutory and Board Notifications

The parole consideration process in Georgia allows for correspondence about the case to be sent to the Board at any time during the offender’s incarceration up to the point of a parole release. The Board solicits information by sending notifications throughout the process to stakeholders including victims, judges, and prosecutors. Registered victims of a crime are given notification at the time the Board is considering a parole release, allowing for a period for the victim to send the Board information about the case. (O.C.G.A. § 17-17-13)



Registered crime victims may also use an automated system to call and receive an offender status update. (Review GA-V.I.P. at <https://pap.georgia.gov/victim-information-program-vip>) The state's prosecutors routinely provide information to the Board regarding cases. During the post-sentence investigation conducted by parole investigators, the judge and the district attorney can provide information and their view of the case. To ensure the Board has current information about cases, the Board sends a notification to judges and district attorneys six months prior to specific offenders becoming parole eligible. This notification is sent

regarding "serious felony" cases. The Board sends the "second solicitation/notification" to the judge and district attorney informing them that the Board is preparing the case for statutory parole consideration and is requesting information about the case. In FY24, 2,324 of these case notifications or second solicitations/notifications were sent to judges and prosecutors. These notifications are sent regarding offenders convicted of serious felonies. The offenses included in this notification process can be found at <https://pap.georgia.gov/parole-consideration/parole-process-georgia>.

As a result of legislation enacted in 2017, the

Parole Board notifies the district attorney if an offender convicted of a serious violent felony is being considered for parole release. The notification is made at a minimum of 90-days prior to the final decision to parole. Those serious violent felonies are murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sodomy, and aggravated sexual battery. The Board, according to the statute, also gives the offender being considered an opportunity to submit information. The additional notification allows for another opportunity for the Parole Board Members to receive additional information



or current community views regarding the possible parole for the offender. In FY24, the Board sent 90-day notifications in 208 cases. (O.C.G.A. § 17-10-6.1.) & (O.C.G.A. § 42-9-43(c) (1))

Judges, district attorneys, sheriffs (of the county of residence prior to the arrest and the county of conviction) and registered victims also receive a 72-hour statutory notification that the offender is about to be paroled. The Board may receive information about the case during this period. (O.C.G.A. § 42-9-47) The Clemency Division, in addition, sends the 72-hour notification in “serious violent felony” cases to the district attorney and sheriff of the county where the offender is being released to, if different from the county of conviction.

tion. If released on parole, parole certificates are forwarded to the clerks of court for each docket the inmate received parole.

Life Sentence Parole Considerations for inmates who are parole eligible according to state law

Inmates serving a life sentence are considered when they become eligible under Georgia law (see State Law and Life Sentences).

Unlike other offenders, the Board’s guidelines are not applied and a TPM is not the result of the Board’s decision. The Board’s decision is either

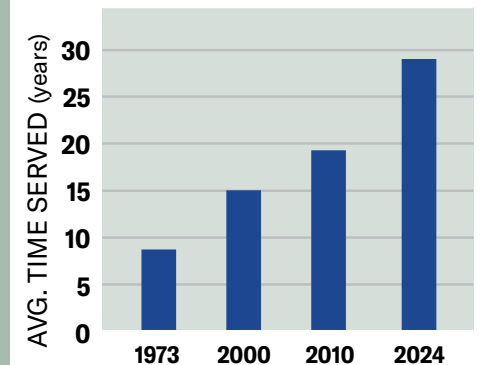
FY 2024 Parole Decisions for Parole Eligible Inmates Serving Life Sentences for a Serious Violent Felony

Lifers serving for a Serious Violent
Felony - Granted/Released in FY24 **67**

Total Lifers Considered
for parole in FY24 **2,046**



Life Sentence Time Served for Serious Violent Felonies – Parole Eligible Offenders



In 1973, life-sentenced inmates convicted of serious violent felonies served less than nine years in prison, on average, before being released from prison. By the year 2000, the average had increased to more than 15 years. By 2010, the average time served on a life sentence prior to a release was nearly 20 years and in FY 2024, the average time served was 29.2 years.



to grant or deny parole. If parole is denied to an inmate serving life, the Board, by policy, will reconsider the case again at least once every eight years. The duration between considerations is a decision made by the Board. Inmates serving life who have been denied parole and have a scheduled reconsideration date may receive expedited parole reviews if the Board receives new information that warrants an earlier review. A parole eligible inmate serving a life sentence who receives a “grant” parole decision may be required to complete a Department of Corrections’ work release program as a precondition to parole.

State Law and Life Sentences

Since 1995, there have been two statutory changes pertaining to serious violent felonies that determine the minimum amount of the sentence to be served to become parole eligible for offenders sentenced to life with parole eligibility. If a crime considered to be a “seven deadly sins” offense was committed prior to 1995, the offender is eligible after seven years. Beginning in 1995, offenders committing these crimes became eligible after serving 14 years. If the crime is committed after June 30, 2006, the offender is eligible for parole after serving 30 years.

Pardon Administration Unit

The Parole Board’s pardon application and decision-making process includes thorough pardon investigations and provides the most comprehensive information available to assist the Board in making quality pardon decisions. A pardon does not expunge, remove, or erase crimes from a person’s criminal record. A pardon is an order of official forgiveness and may be granted to individuals who have maintained a good reputation in their community and have remained crime free for a



required period of years following the completion of their sentence(s), to include parole or probation.

The pardon process is continuously reviewed to ensure informed decisions are the result. The current application requires applicants to provide information including their version of criminal offenses, justification for why they should be considered for a pardon, including a description of how they have contributed to their community. Applicants seeking a pardon for offenses requiring registration on Georgia’s Sex Offender Registry must be crime free for ten years following the completion of all sentences, as opposed to five years for all other conviction types. As a part of

the application process, these applicants must also provide a current copy of their most recent risk level evaluation as assigned by the Sexual Offender Registration Review Board (SORRB), provide a psychosexual evaluation, and submit to a disclosure polygraph.

A state law adopted in 2015 created a notification process informing registered victims and prosecutors, in specific cases, when an offender is seeking a pardon. This allows victims and prosecutors the opportunity to send the Board information about the case. The Parole Board exceeds the statutory requirements and sends these notifications regarding all applications received. During FY24, the Parole

Board sent 617 notifications to district attorneys regarding ex-offenders applying for pardons.

In FY24, 845 pardon and restoration of rights applications were received and 446 were granted (all types). There were 118 fewer applications granted during the fiscal year compared to the previous year.

Clemency (Parole and Criminal) Investigators

Parole investigators conduct and complete investigations collecting information about the offender's conviction offenses. The process includes interviewing inmates for personal history statements and completing post sentence investigations. Fifty-seven (57) investigators work in the Investigations

Pardons Granted
FY24

Applications received (all types – pardons and RR)	845
Pardons granted without firearms being restored	169
Pardons granted with firearms being restored	177
Restorations of civil and political rights	90
Restorations of civil and political rights with firearms restored	10
Total applications granted (including applications filed in previous year)	446



Unit. Thirty-six (36) investigators are assigned to the field and complete post sentence investigations and profiles for all offenders sentenced by Georgia courts. Ten (10) investigators are assigned to work within the prisons to conduct personal history statements on inmates during the diagnostic process at which time they will interview inmates.

The Board has eleven (11) P.O.S.T. (Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council) certified criminal investigators who conduct face-to-face interviews of inmates serving a life sentence with the possibility of parole and these investigators interview all former offenders who are applying for restoration of civil and political

rights, a pardon, or a pardon with firearm restoration. These investigators utilize their experience and interviewing techniques to collect necessary information required by the Board Members to make decisions in these cases. In FY24, the clemency investigators completed 34,936 investigations for the Parole Board.

Critical Analysis Unit

The mission of the Critical Analysis Unit (CAU) is to investigate, prepare and submit specialized parole eligible cases to the Board for consideration and to support the operations of the Clemency Division through comprehensive audits, analysis and



THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS UNIT'S RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

- 1** Managing the operational plan for the Clemency Division's intelligence functions, including the mission, goals, and objectives, as a guide to submitting cases to the Board.
- 2** Researching and analyzing data to develop forecasts, estimates and models to support recommendations.
- 3** Developing and coordinating proficiency training and audits in the various units within the Clemency Division to maintain effective and efficient operations.



FY24 CLEMENCY ACTIONS

Parole Certificates	3,890
Out-of-State Parole Orders	197
Conditional Transfers	751
Out-of-State Conditional Transfers	120
Supervised Reprieves	461
Out-of-State Supervised Reprieves	0
Commutations	0
Medical Reprieves	10
Out-of-State ICE Orders	14
Total Prison Releases by Parole	5,443
Total Discharges from Parole	4,930
Total Guidelines Decisions	12,257
Life Sentence Cases Denied	1,953
Life Sentence Cases Granted/released (Total includes the 67 SVF life sentence cases)	93
Total Life Sentence Case Decisions	2,046
Restoration of Civil and Political Rights Granted	100
Pardon Grants	346
Total Pardons & Restorations Granted	446

continuous training and development.

Analyzing, understanding, and providing information to the Board regarding crime trends and criminal behaviors is important to the Board to make an informed decision regarding a release. CAU personnel are on call 24-hours a day, seven days a week, assisting the Clemency Division with operations and responses to critical incidents and major investigations involving parole eligible offenders housed by the Georgia Department of Corrections. This unit collaborates with the Georgia Department of Corrections regarding Security Threat Groups (STG), gang offenders, offenders with Immigration and Customs detainers and those offenders who are classified with medical requirements in order to provide Parole Board Members with critical case information prior to the parole decision.

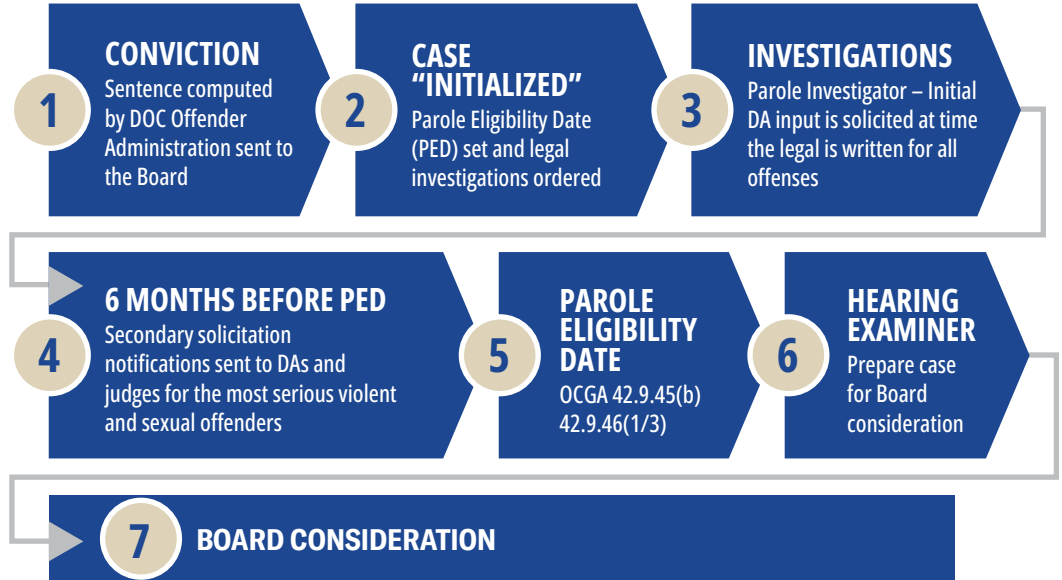
The Clemency Division is tasked with preparing cases for the Board to consider. The first step in processing cases for consideration is referred to as initializing the case. This includes reviewing the sentencing package for completeness, determining consideration type, and requesting legal investigations. In FY24, 16,972 cases were initialized.

In FY24, the Board considered 19,328 cases for releases or future tentative parole months.

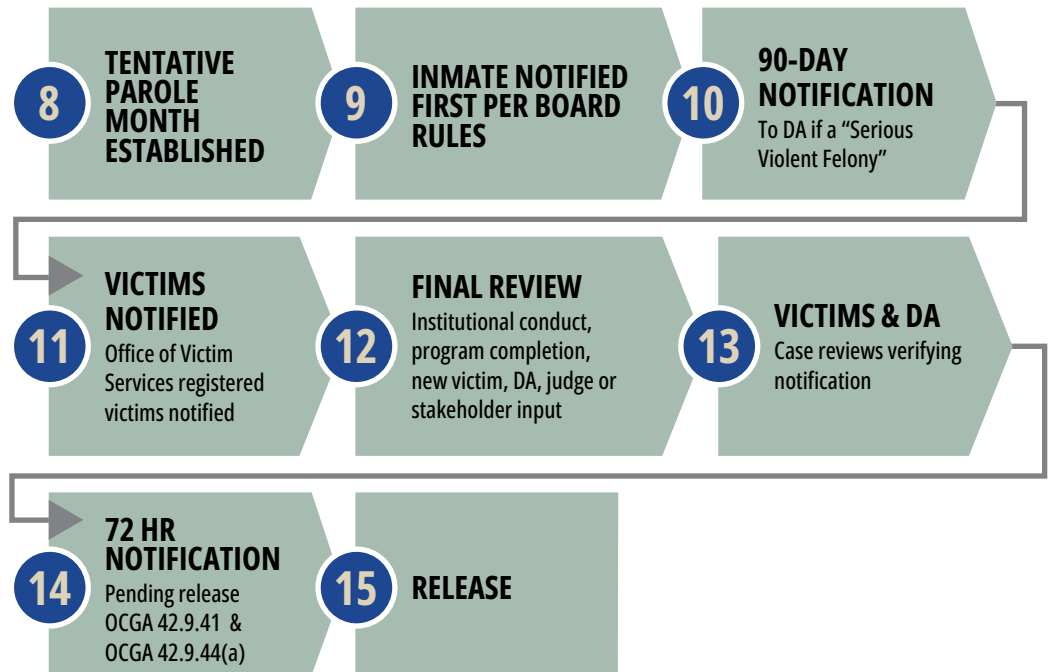
- 2,046 life sentenced cases
- 12,257 guideline cases
- 5,025 short sentence cases

The Board's Critical Analysis Unit (CAU) is staffed by executive clemency subject matter experts responsible for conducting final reviews and audits of cases to ensure correctness. During FY24, 9,193 final reviews were completed and hundreds of random audits were completed to verify the accuracy of case evaluations, risk level assessments and assigned crime severity levels.

PAROLE PROCESS PRE-DECISION



PAROLE PROCESS POST-DECISION





Field Services Division

The mission of the Field Services Division is to effectively and efficiently manage the processes related to Parole Violations, Commutations, and the Interstate Compact. The Field Services Division ensures that violations of parole conditions by offenders are quickly addressed. If necessary, the offender's parole is revoked, and the offender is returned to prison. In addition, if a parolee meets specific requirements, a request for commutation can be submitted to the Board. The district operations managers facilitate the revocation, commutation, and Interstate Compact processes for the Board. The Field Services Division comprises four units: the Scanning and Imaging Unit, the Warrant/GCIC Entry Unit, the Violations/Commutations Unit, and the Interstate Compact Unit.

FY24 Parole Population

During Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), the population of offenders on parole under community supervision decreased from 16,369 on July 1, 2023, to 15,105 on June 30, 2024. The number of offenders discharged

from parole was 4,930. The percentage of successful parole completion was 72% for the fiscal year. The cumulative number of offenders under parole supervision during the fiscal year was 22,406. Offenders released on parole are supervised by the Georgia Department of Community Supervision.

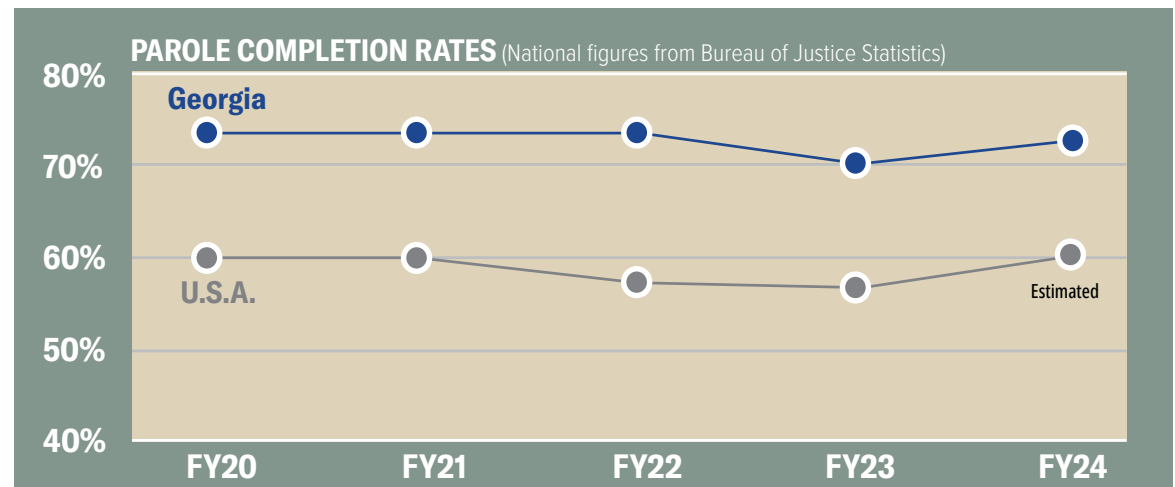
Parole Violations

The Parole Board enhances public safety by quickly responding to offenders who violate the conditions of their parole. Violations of parole consist of new criminal charges (felony and misdemeanor) and technical violations related to failing to follow the conditions of their parole. The offenders who violate the terms of their release may have their parole revoked and be returned to prison. When a violation occurs, the supervising officer generates a report detailing the delinquent behavior. Upon receipt of the report, the district operations manager conducts a thorough case investigation to determine what action the Board should take in

the best interest of public safety. The recommendation to the Board could be treatment referral up to revocation of parole.

Warrants/GCIC

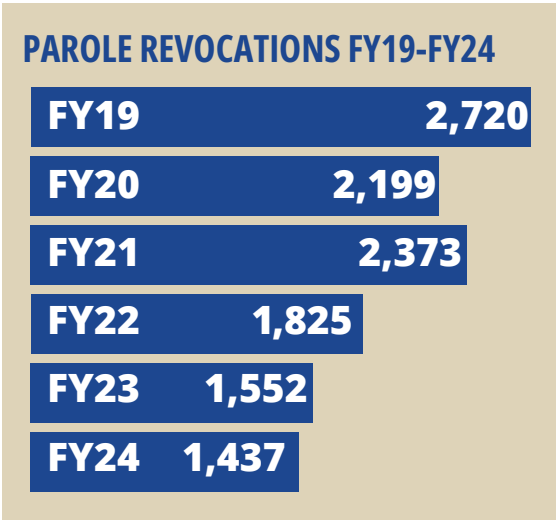
State law authorizes the Parole Board Members to issue warrants for the arrest of alleged parole violators. Upon notification that an offender has violated the conditions of release, the district operations manager reviews the violations and the case history to determine if a Board Warrant should be issued to immediately place the offender into custody. In FY24, a total of 3,747 warrants were issued by the Parole Board. If the offender cannot be immediately located, the Parole Board Warrant is then placed in the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) system or the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system. Both systems are connected to the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) database that is used by law enforcement agencies for wanted person entry. In FY24,



the GCIC Unit entered 2,100 warrants into the GCIC/NCIC system. By accessing the system, law enforcement agencies know if an offender should be taken into custody.

Revocations & Parole Revocation Hearings

During FY24, the Board revoked 1,437 parole violators returning the offenders to prison to serve their sentences in confinement. The number revoked decreased by 115 from the previous fiscal year. Of the FY24 total number of revocations, less than 1% were revoked based on technical violations which include, but not limited to; drug use, curfew violations, or failure to pay fines and fees. A revocation can occur during a parole revocation hearing, when the offender signs a waiver removing the need for a revocation hearing, or automatic revocation if the conditions exist according to O.C.G.A. § 42-9-51. The appropriate recommenda-



tions and enforcement of intermediate sanctions, such as treatment referral, administrative hearings, electronic monitoring, GPS monitoring, day reporting centers and parole detention centers result

in the low percentage of technical parole violators being revoked and returned to prison. The purpose of intermediate sanctions is to bring the offenders who are not a threat to public safety back into compliance with their parole conditions. Upon the establishment of probable cause, parole revocation hearings are held to address violations of parole. Parole Board Members conducted 272 final revocation hearings during FY24. Each hearing is presided over by an individual Board Member who hears the evidence in the case and makes a recommendation to the full Board to either revoke parole and return the offender to prison or continue parole and community supervision. Most offenders facing parole revocation proceedings admit their parole violations and sign a waiver to be returned to prison eliminating a final hearing. The district operations managers are responsible for scheduling and managing the parole revocation hearing process. Parole revocation hearings are conducted





from the Board's central office in Atlanta via video conferencing or in person at the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison in Jackson. For video conference hearings, the offender, the officer of record and the Board Member may be in various locations. Use of this technology has reduced travel costs for all three agencies involved in the process, the Parole Board, the Department of Corrections, and the Department of Community Supervision.

Commutations

The State Board of Pardons and Paroles may grant other forms of clemency to meet special needs of the criminal justice system. The Parole Board has the authority to commute an offender's sentence to time served. This includes offenders serving parole. Offenders serving parole may petition to have their prison sentences commuted by the Board. Senate Bill 174, passed in 2017, included a provision requiring the Board to consider commuting the sentences of specific offenders serving a split sentence who have successfully completed twelve (12) consecutive months of parole supervision (O.C.G.A. § 42-8-21). Under provisions of the legislation, offenders must have probation to serve following the prison portion of their sentence. The district operations managers conduct a thorough investigation of cases meeting the criteria for consideration by the Board. During FY 2024, the Parole Board considered 761 cases for commutation under SB174 and commuted nine (9) cases that met the strict criteria of the Board. Under SB174, the prison/parole portion of the sentence ends and the case transfers to probation supervision.

District Operations Managers

The district operations manager thoroughly investigates alleged parole violations and commutation requests and determines what appropriate



actions are to be recommended to the Board in the interest of public safety. This may include that a Board Warrant be issued to take an offender into custody or a request for additional investigative information. The district operations managers are assigned to the ten (10) Judicial Districts in the state of Georgia and are an integral link between the Board and the Department of Community Supervision (DCS), as it relates to parole violators and commutations. District operations managers are P.O.S.T. certified officers and P.O.S.T. certified general and or firearm instructors. In addition to managing the parole violations, revocation, and commutation process, they provide training to other law enforcement and perform Board security and special law enforcement details. They are required to complete twenty (20) hours of P.O.S.T. training each year. The training includes weapons requalification.

Interstate Compact

The State Board of Pardons and Paroles, in FY24, was a member of the Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS). ICAOS is responsible for creating and upholding the rules of the Commission. ICAOS comprises all fifty (50) states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. The State Board of Pardons and Paroles' Interstate Compact Unit is responsible for processing the transfer of all Georgia inmates paroled to an out-of-state residence. In addition, the unit responded to violations, conducted probable cause hearings, handled extraditions, and addressed victim issues relating to these cases. During FY24, the unit released 222 offenders to out-of-state supervision.

As of June 30, 2024, there were 2,143 Georgia of-

fenders under active parole supervision in Compact states and 1,349 other Compact state offenders on parole supervision in Georgia. Another responsibility of the unit is to release foreign national offenders to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainees.

Via the ICE Rapid REPAT (Removal of Eligible Parolees Accepted for Transfer) Program, fourteen (14) foreign national offenders were released to ICE for deportation at an estimated cost avoidance of \$2,530,348.

Scanning and Imaging

The Scanning and Imaging Unit has an integral role in the Parole Board’s transition to a paperless environment. During FY24, 38,110 documents were scanned into the case management systems (Portal, GPEDS and TRIM system) utilized by the Board to make parole decisions. The unit images offender documents that are generated daily, to include correspondence, revocation documents, and victim notifications. There were 1,016 active lifer offender parole files scanned, and 10,109 archived files imaged during the fiscal year. There are approximately 127,459 archived files remaining to be imaged. Upon completion, all of the Parole Board’s files will be accessible electronically.

New Direction Recovery Program

The New Direction Recovery Program located at the Treutlen Probation Detention Center is an intensive addiction program for parolees who are both higher risk and higher need offenders who were not successful in community-based treatment and supervision. The Parole Board utilizes the program as an alternative to revocation for some offenders. For FY24, thirty (30) parolees were referred to the program. As of June 30, 2024, nine-



teen (19) parolees had graduated from the program during the fiscal year and were returned to parole supervision. Some graduates were enrolled during the previous fiscal year.

2024 Fiscal Year Cost Avoidance
\$343 MILLION

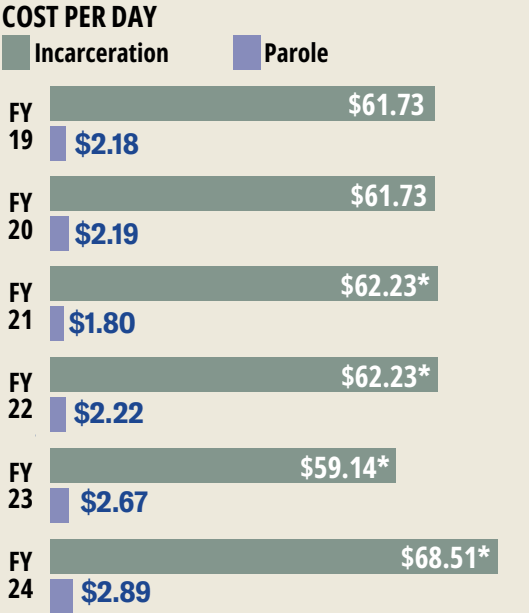
The fiscal year cost avoidance is calculated based on the FY24 cost per day to incarcerate a state inmate in Georgia (*\$68.51) compared to the community supervision cost per day (\$2.89). In FY24 the annual cost avoidance to the prison system because of offenders serving their sentence on parole is calculated at more than \$343 million.

- FY23 \$319 million
- FY22 \$376 million
- FY21 \$404 million
- FY20 \$399 million

* Most recent Ga. Dept. of Corrections’ cost per day

Cost Avoidance

The graph below for FY19-FY24 shows cost of incarceration versus cost of supervision, per day, for state of Georgia.



* Most recent Ga. Dept. of Corrections’ cost per day



Georgia Office of Victim Services

The Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS) plays a crucial role in ensuring that the voices of registered crime victims are heard at every stage of the post-conviction process. Representing three state agencies; the Georgia Department of Corrections, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, and the Georgia Department of Community Supervision, GOVS provides essential services to victims whose offenders are in prison or under community supervision.

GOVS keeps registered victims updated on the parole status of their offenders and notifies them if an offender is being considered for parole or has been released from confinement. This proactive approach ensures that victims are not left in the dark about the status of their offenders. Moreover, GOVS operates the Georgia Victim Information Program (GA-V.I.P.), which is a 24-hour automated information system providing victims and their families with access to information about their offenders. The office corresponds directly with vic-

tims to empower them with the information they need to stay informed and involved in the criminal justice process.

In FY24, 13,189 phone calls from or to victims were handled by staff, 29,665 outgoing correspondences were sent to victims in response to concerns, and 9,320 correspondences were received from victims and filed with the office.

Georgia Victim Information Program - GA-V.I.P.

The Georgia Victim Information Program, GA-V.I.P., is a 24-hour automated information system. It provides registered crime victims and their family members with access to information about their offender. Victims can register with GA-V.I.P. by completing a victim impact statement or crime victim notification request form. The forms can be filled out online at www.pap.georgia.gov or requested by calling 404-651-6668 or 1-800-593-9474. Upon registration, victims are issued a

Personal Identification Number (PIN). By accessing the system (1-800-593-9474), victims can learn the status of the offender. Additionally, through GA-V.I.P., registered victims receive information regarding a prison release after the inmate completes the court-ordered term of incarceration (end of sentence), or if the inmate is placed on community supervision. For FY24, there were 3,078 new GA-V.I.P. registrants, and 4,480 phone calls from victims were logged into the system. The system made 2,097 calls to victims.

Victim Offender Dialogue

The Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD) program offers a structured, safe environment for victims of violent crimes to engage in a one-on-one meeting with their offenders. This program is designed to allow victims to ask crucial questions that only the offender can answer, providing a unique opportunity for dialogue that is centered on the victim's needs. The primary objective of the VOD program

GEORGIA OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES FY24 BY THE NUMBERS

13,189

telephone calls handled

29,665

pieces of correspondence sent

9,320

pieces of correspondence received



is to ensure that the victim's voice is heard and to help the offender comprehend the full impact of their actions. Initiated solely by the victim, this program requires the offender's voluntary participation and their acknowledgment of their role in the crime. The offender must also understand that participation does not influence any considerations by the Board. The process demands thorough preparation, spanning several months, facilitated by trained professionals. These facilitators play a pivotal role in building trust and honesty with both parties, guiding them through the preparation phase, and ensuring that all involved are adequately prepared for the face-to-face dialogue.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, five (5) VOD dialogues were initiated. Five (5) more dialogues are in the process of being completed in FY 2025.

Victim Support Partners

The Victim Support Partners (VSPs) program is a comprehensive network throughout the entire state, made up of crime victims registered with the

Georgia Office of Victim Services. Within this network, dedicated victim volunteers spend time offering aid, counsel, and solace to other crime victims during the post-conviction phase. These Victim Support Partners meet regularly for group gatherings, participate in Victim Impact Sessions, and assist other survivors as they prepare for Victim Offender Dialogues. Additionally, they actively engage in community activities supported by the Georgia Office of Victim Services, further emphasizing the program's dedication to promoting a culture of support and recovery.

Victim Impact Sessions

During Fiscal Year 2022, Victim Impact Sessions (VIS) were introduced. These sessions provide an opportunity for victims whose offender is within twelve to eighteen months of parole consideration to discuss their case in a small group setting with a Georgia Parole Board Member, a GOVS staff member, and a senior hearing examiner, who works in the Board's Clemency Division. By focusing on cas-

es that are about to be reviewed by the Board, the Board is able to receive more current and timely information from both the victim and the district attorney. Since April 2022, nineteen (19) Victim Impact Sessions have been conducted, and three hundred (300) victims have had the opportunity to meet with the Board. In FY24, nine (9) Victim Impact Sessions were conducted. The sessions were conducted in the Southern, Ocmulgee, Columbia, Cherokee, Augusta, Waycross, Dougherty, Clayton, and Alcovy judicial circuits.

Fiscal Year 2024 Victim-Centered Events and Highlights

The Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS) had another successful National Crime Victims' Rights Week in April 2024. The office participated in twelve different events around the state, including organizing and hosting a panel discussion titled, "From Surviving to Thriving: How to Find Help After a Crime," at Clayton State University. The panel focused on the rights, options, and services available to victims after a crime occurs and featured experts from various victim-centered organizations. In total, staff contacted nearly one thousand (1,000) individuals to help spread awareness about victims' rights.

Throughout the year, GOVS provided training to Victim Witness Assistance Advocates from prosecuting offices around the state, Georgia Department of Corrections counselors, and other community stakeholders. For the second year, GOVS also presented at the National Association of Victim Assistance in Corrections' Annual Conference. The presentation titled, "The Little Things: Unveiling the Impact of Subtle Support in Victim Services," focused on educating post-conviction advocates about the seemingly small gestures in advocacy that make a difference in the lives of crime victims.





Human Resources

Human Resources FY 2024

The Office of Human Resources (HR) recruits and retains top talent which is accomplished by increasing employee morale. Career development is promoted for staff by implementing mentorship and leadership development programs. Leadership prides itself on employee growth and development. Pre-management and management training and continuing education opportunities are available to staff. HR supports and conducts regular employee engagement activities.

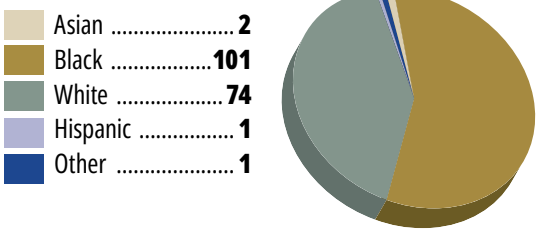
An agency trend is a revitalized workforce re-balancing itself with younger cohorts. In FY 2024, the agency offered great internship opportunities including a paid internship program. The agency is always enhancing processes for better efficiency through modernization of the technical infrastructure to support current and future work demands.

Reasons for Retention

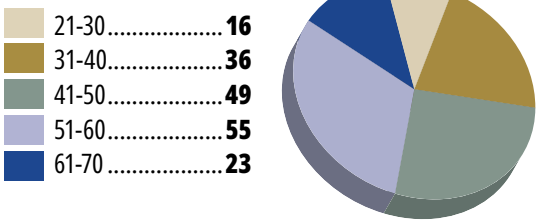
- Employee engagement
- Positive work-life balance
- Employees performing work that matches their interest and strengths
- Flexible and hybrid work schedules
- Diverse culture with equal opportunities for advancement



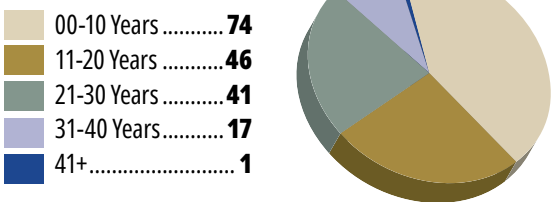
Total Full-time Employees 179*



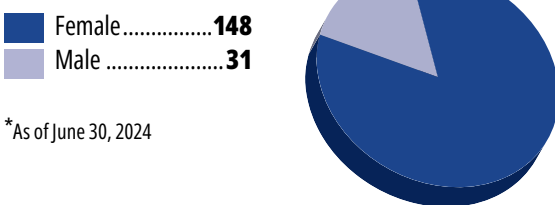
Employees By Age Group*



Employees By Tenure*



Employees By Gender*



* As of June 30, 2024

The agency employs 11 U.S. military veterans.



Office of Training

All agency employees must complete in-service training on an annual basis. Sworn staff must complete a minimum of 20 hours annually which includes mandatory firearms requalification, use of deadly force and Deescalation and Community Policing training.

Non-sworn staff must complete a minimum of eight hours of training annually. Both sworn and non-sworn staff must complete Unlawful Harassment and Professionalism and Ethics training each year as a part of their training hours and any other training as prescribed by law.

TRAINING HOURS TAKEN BY STAFF FY24

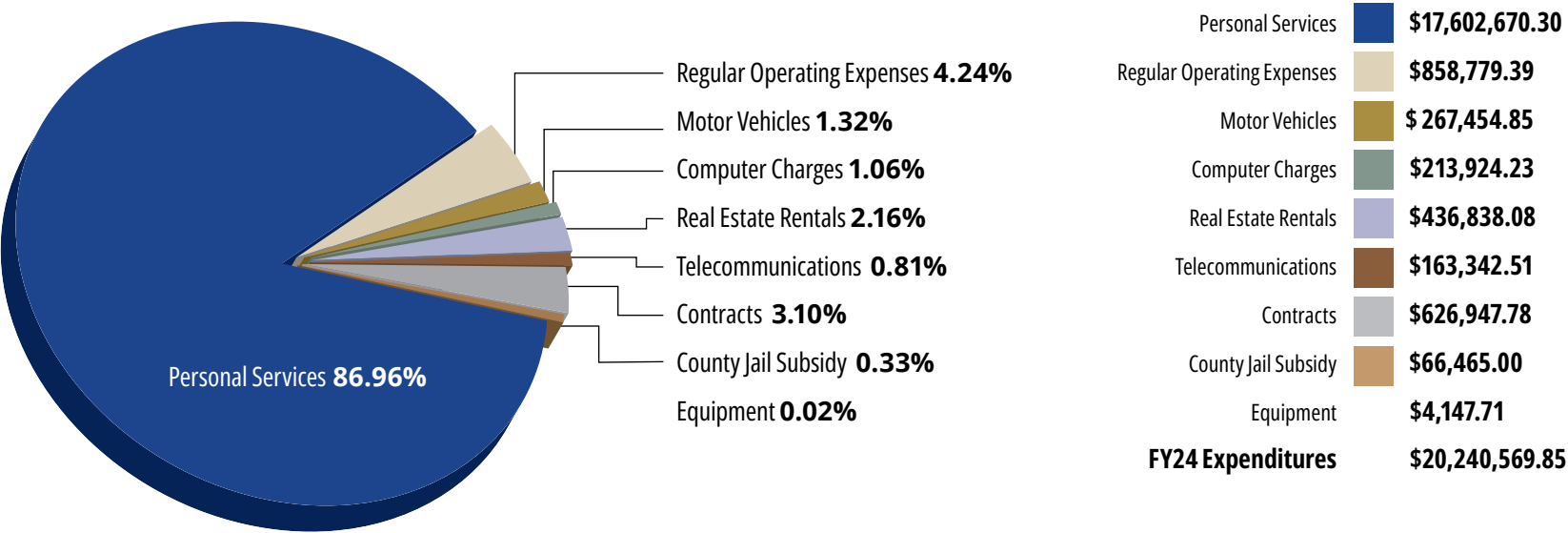
Sworn staff	3,245
Non-sworn staff	711
<hr/>	
Training hours delivered by Parole Training Office	1,262





BUDGET

FY 2024 Expenditures by Object Class (Total Funds)



FY 2024 Budget & Expenditures by Program (Total Funds)

Program	FY 2024 Budget	FY 2024 Expenditures	% of Total Budget
Board Administration	2,429,519.00	2,411,494.54	11.8853%
Clemency Decisions	17,266,713.00	17,101,467.06	84.4692%
Victim Services	745,204.00	727,608.25	3.6455%
Total Funds	\$20,441,436.00	\$20,240,569.85	100.0000%

FY 2024 Expenditures by Fund Type (Total Funds)

Fund Type	FY 2024
State Funds	20,050,228.34
Federal Funds	78,069.11
Other Funds	112,272.40
Total Funds	\$20,240,569.85

Note: Expenditures do not account for an outstanding reserve request to utilize \$156,905 in FY24 funds in FY25 for the GCIC disposition backlog overtime project.



STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2024