

Bourne Demands Answers as Pritzker Grants Clemency to Convicted Murderers and Releases Over 1,300 Prison Inmates Through Executive Action

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LITCHFIELD — Concerned about public safety in Illinois, State Representative Avery Bourne (R-Morrisonville) joined fellow House Republicans in a letter asking the Acting Director of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to provide answers to a series of questions prior to the release of inmates from any Illinois correctional center in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic.

“We have a lot of questions that deserve answers,” said Bourne, whose district includes correctional centers in Taylorville and Hillsboro. “Lawmakers had to learn from a news report that in the last 6 weeks, IDOC has reduced its population by 1,345 inmates and Governor Pritzker has commuted the sentences of 7 convicted murderers. He cannot hide behind a Coronavirus pandemic to make these decisions. The public deserves answers. I am afraid the Governor is using this pandemic as an excuse to push his political priority of releasing inmates early.”

A letter dated April 9 was sent to IDOC Acting Director Rob Jeffreys, in which Bourne and 21 other House Republicans asked specific public safety-related questions about which inmates would be granted furloughs through Governor Pritzker’s [Executive Order 2020-21](#). The Order provides Jeffreys with the discretion to utilize furloughs to allow certain inmates to leave IDOC facilities. Up to this point, information regarding which inmates, serving time for what criminal offenses, and other relevant information, has been scarce.

“We don’t know what parameters are being used to decide which inmates qualify for these new furloughs, what kind of oversight will be used to monitor them, how this will impact the staff at IDOC facilities, or even whether local law enforcement in the communities where the furloughed inmates will be released will be noticed prior to the furlough taking effect. We’ve asked these questions, and the Governor’s staff has yet to provide answers.”

In the letter, the lawmakers also asked for information relative to an [Executive Order](#) issued last week, which, among other things, provides for the early release of certain IDOC inmates. Bourne and her colleagues want to know the name of every inmate released under this recent policy change, the crime for which they were sentenced, and the criminal history used to determine eligibility for early release. They also asked for clarification about how the IDOC plans to utilize hospitals and medical facilities near IDOC facilities and what plans are in place to ensure that an adequate amount of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and ventilators will be available.

“The health and safety of our Corrections Officers, IDOC staff, and of those in our community hospitals should be a priority. We need to know if there is adequate PPE at our IDOC facilities and what precautions are being taken to keep these workers safe,” stressed Bourne. “I represent several Critical Access Hospitals near prisons that have

limited intensive care capabilities. In the case of a major Coronavirus outbreak at a prison, what is the plan to ensure our hospitals have enough ICU beds and ventilators to absorb the increased number of COVID-19 patients? We have an obligation to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our constituents. Up to this point, the Governor has dedicated time in multiple daily press conferences to tout his support for releasing prisoners but has been silent on the public safety implications.”

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