

Virginia General Assembly



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General Assembly Republicans Call for Moratorium on Release of Violent Felons

RICHMOND, VA, 12 May 2020 – House Republican Leader C. Todd Gilbert (R-Shenandoah) and Senate Republican Leader Thomas K. Norment, Jr. (R-James City), and the immediate past chairmen of the House and Senate Courts of Justice Committees, Delegate Robert B. “Rob” Bell (R-Albemarle) and Senator Mark D. Obenshain (R-Rockingham), today issued the following statement calling on Governor Ralph S. Northam (D) to institute a moratorium on the early release of violent felons by the Virginia Parole Board:

“Yesterday’s announcement by Secretary Moran that the early release of Vincent Martin has been delayed for 30 days was welcome news. In our view, the murderer of Richmond Police Officer Michael Connors should complete the life sentence he received upon conviction.

“Secretary Moran correctly observed that a ‘cloud’ had formed over the Parole Board’s decision to release Mr. Martin. Regardless of the findings of the Inspector General’s investigation, that cloud will remain if Mr. Martin is freed within the next 30 days. Releasing an individual who was sentenced to life imprisonment for brutally murdering an on-duty police officer is an outrageous act and an affront to justice.

“It is time for Governor Northam to demonstrate support for the victims, and the families of victims, of violent crimes. The Governor should immediately impose a moratorium on the early release of those convicted of violent felonies.

“The revelations by the *Associated Press* that the Parole Board has ‘released dozens of violent offenders, including killers, rapists and kidnappers’ over the last several weeks are shocking. It is unconscionable that victims’ families have not received proper notification, as required by law, of these disgraceful decisions.

“The remedy to further miscarriages of justice is simple and obvious. A moratorium on the early release of violent felons will restore confidence in our justice system, demonstrate respect for victims and their families, and ensure the safety of all Virginians. We urge the Governor to institute this moratorium immediately.”

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