

# Preparing for the Pardon Hearing

## Helpful information/FAQs from the [Governor's Pardon website](#):

### *How does the pardon review process work?*

1. **Initial Review:** Applications are first reviewed for eligibility and completeness. Applicants are notified if they are ineligible. If their applications are incomplete, they are provided an opportunity to submit the missing materials. Due to the large volume of applications, this may take several months.
2. **Supplemental Review:** If an applicant is eligible and their application is complete, their application is placed in line to be considered by the Pardon Advisory Board. During this time, applications receive a second, more thorough review. It is possible that a person initially deemed eligible can be identified as ineligible after supplemental review. In that case, the applicant is notified that their application will no longer be considered.
3. **Hearing:** Most applicants will be scheduled for a hearing in front of the Board. This typically has taken at least 18 months from the date the application is received. Applicants will be notified about a month in advance that they have been scheduled for a hearing and will be provided with the logistical details. Hearings are open to the public and may be held virtually or in-person. Applicants must be present for their hearing and may appear for virtual hearings by video or telephone. If an applicant has an unavoidable conflict, the hearing may be rescheduled to a later month. Each applicant will appear before the Board for approximately 15 minutes.
  - Board members may ask the applicant questions about:
    - the offense
    - how their sentence went
    - what they have done since the completion of their sentence
    - why they think they should receive a pardon
    - further information about anything revealed in background checks or disclosed on the application.
4. **Final Decision:** After a hearing, the Board will vote either to recommend an applicant for pardon or not. If the applicant is recommended by a majority of the Board members present, the Governor then reviews that application and makes the final decision on whether to grant a pardon or not. If an applicant does not receive a majority vote of the Board, then that application is not forwarded to the Governor for consideration, and the applicant is denied. Applicants are notified of the final decision on their application about a month after their hearing.
5. **Expedited Review:** Select applications for older, low-level felony offenses may be placed on an expedited review track. These applications undergo the same thorough review process but are not scheduled for a hearing. Instead, upon the recommendation for pardon by the Chair of the Board, these applications are sent directly to the Governor for consideration. If the Chair does not recommend a pardon, the applicant is scheduled for a hearing and their application will proceed through the standard review process. Similarly, select applications involving violent or repeat offenses may be placed on an expedited review track and denied without a hearing. Expedited applicants will be notified of the final decision.

6. **Reapplying:** There is no appeal process for denials or ineligibility determinations. However, a denied applicant can reapply 18 months after their denial. Ineligible applicants may reapply once they are eligible.

### ***What factors does the Pardon Advisory Board consider?***

All eligible applicants will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The following factors may be considered:

- The seriousness of and circumstances surrounding an applicant's criminal offenses.
- An applicant's entire criminal record.
- How an applicant's sentence went and whether restitution has been paid.
- How much time has passed since the offense occurred.
- Input and opinions from the DA, court, victim, or other community members.
- An applicant's personal development and progress since the crime was committed, such as:
  1. Employment history, training, education, community service, and civic activities.
  2. Letters of recommendation documenting firsthand knowledge of an applicant's development and progress.
- If an applicant has a significant and documented need for a pardon, such as employment, schooling, job training, or the desire to hold public office.
  - If applicable and possible, an applicant should submit a letter from a prospective employer, licensing agency, school, or training program to demonstrate this need.
  - If applicable and possible, the applicant should provide written documentation of significant steps taken in pursuit of the sought employment, schooling, job training, or public office.
  - Undocumented or over-generalized claims that an applicant needs a pardon will generally be insufficient to warrant pardon.

### ***What is the Pardon Advisory Board's contact information?***

Application materials should be mailed to:

*Office of the Governor  
Attn: Pardon Advisory Board  
PO Box 7863  
Madison, WI 53707*

***Questions or requests for an update in application status*** may be emailed to [GOVPardons@wisconsin.gov](mailto:GOVPardons@wisconsin.gov). If you do not have access to email, you can call (608) 266-1212. Milwaukee area applicants are encouraged to call (414) 227-4344. However, details regarding when exactly your application may be reviewed, what the "chances" are for your application, or other related inquiries will not be answered by staff.



**Make sure you are in a quiet, private space** for the hearing. Keep a copy of your application and case information (copies of certified court documents) with you in case you need to reference them during the hearing.

**Update the Pardon Board with any changes in contact information!** See highlighted info above on contacting the Pardon Board.