

# Patterson condemns early parole

By Mike Scanlon  
staff writer

Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson says he's angry about last week's state Supreme Court decision to allow early paroles for some 1,000 state prison inmates.

Patterson said he plans a petition drive to stiffen state sentencing procedures generally and to specifically eliminate early paroles caused by overcrowding.

Mass sentence reductions are required under a 1980 law approved by the Legislature following voter rejection of an income tax hike proposal which would have financed prison construction.

others who would have been eligible anyway.

PATTERSON claimed the law was unconstitutional on two grounds. He said it violated the state's minimum mandatory sentencing provision — a voter-approved constitutional amendment passed in 1978 after a Patterson-initiated petition drive — and it constituted legislative interference in the governor's power to commute sentences.

The Supreme Court disagreed, ruling the legislature's action merely extended its power to set penalties for criminal violations.

"My initial reaction, of course, was disappointment. I thought we had a very solid legal argument. I still do. But obviously the court has the final say."

"(But) my reaction's turned to anger. In this whole system the public is given little consideration."

Patterson said he recognizes the problems of prison overcrowding, but he said the sentence reduction plan "creates another problem of equal severity if not worse . . . this law is very dangerous and endangers the public."



L. Brooks Patterson angered by decision

THE LONG-TERM effect of the law, Patterson said, will cancel out the state's minimum mandatory sentencing provision.

"Let's assume only two (overcrowd-

ing) emergencies a year. A 20-year sentence will be reduced to 12 years."

Patterson added that he expects more than two emergency overcrowding declarations annually.

"I'm not oblivious to (prison) conditions," added Patterson. "My solution is expansion of the prison system by re-vamping and refurbishing existing facilities."

He singled out Eloise in Wayne County and Kinchloe Air Force Base in the Upper Peninsula. A portion of Kinchloe is already in operation at Kinross State Prison, but Patterson said the shut-down base is under-utilized.

The early parole system will tend to close debate on system expansion, Patterson said. He plans to initiate a petition drive on the issue after a Patterson-backed drive for capital punishment, already underway, gathers enough signatures to appear on the ballot.

The new drive will be "a fairly broad salvo at the sentencing structure," Patterson said, and will include new language on minimum mandatory sentencing and the elimination of population-linked paroles.

# Philadelphia planner at LIT

Urban planner Edmund Bacon will share his redevelopment experiences in Philadelphia during the third of his three-part architecture presentations at Lawrence Institute of Technology, Southfield, on Thursday, May 21, at 6:30 p.m.

Bacon, this year's visiting professor of architecture at LIT, will present "Downtown is Looking Up" in the architecture auditorium on LIT's campus, 21000 W. 10 Mile, near Northwest-ern.

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