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Steve Marshall

Alabama Attorney General



For media inquiries only, contact:

Mike Lewis (334) 353-2199

Joy Patterson (334) 242-7491

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Attorney General Steve Marshall Supports Legislation to Reform the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced his support of legislation to reform the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles. The legislation was proposed by the Attorney General’s Office and is sponsored by Senator Cam Ward and Representative Connie Rowe.

“In January 2018, Jimmy O’Neal Spencer, a violent offender sentenced to life imprisonment, was released from prison after being recklessly and wrongfully paroled by the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles,” Attorney General Marshall said.

“Months later, Spencer brutally murdered two women and a seven-year-old boy in their homes. This tragic failure of our justice system should have never happened – and cannot ever be allowed to happen again.

"Governor Ivey and I have worked hand in hand to prepare a comprehensive proposal that prioritizes public safety within Alabama’s parole system. Over the course of the last two months, we have had numerous conversations and have exchanged written correspondence with the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles related to the Board’s proposed corrective action plan. We have determined that changes to the law are critical to ensuring public safety.

“Under the reform legislation sponsored by Senator Ward and Representative Rowe, the process by which the Governor appoints Board members would be made more in line with the Governor’s standing appointment authority for other boards, with Senate confirmation. The legislation creates the position of ‘Director of Pardons and Paroles’ who would serve as the agency head, while the Board would retain its independent judicial function of granting or denying parole and issuing pardons. The legislation codifies the Board’s existing policies on parole consideration dates. The bill also strengthens the Board’s duty to provide notice to victims. These changes are designed to increase accountability, set clear parameters, and make certain that no prisoner who is a threat to public safety can slip through the cracks.

“I want to thank Senator Cam Ward and Representative Connie Rowe for working closely with my office to draft and steer this vital reform legislation,” added Attorney General Marshall. “Alabama crime victims and their families have let it be known that accountability must be restored to the Pardons and Paroles Board in order to protect the public. This legislation will help accomplish this goal and I look forward to its swift passage this session.”

