**Pardons give governor power to change lives**

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**Pardons granted by Gov. Dennis Daugaard**

As recommended by the South Dakota Board of Pardons and Paroles, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has granted executive clemency to the following individuals:   
  
**Name:** Pardoned crime; county; sentence date  
  
**Antijunti, Brock Alan:** 3 DUIs, 1 felony, 2 misdemeanors; Hand, Stanley, Hughes; August 19, 1996; December 9, 1996; March 29, 1999  
**Malfero, Ryan Anthony:** Possession of a controlled substance; Minnehaha; November 27, 1995  
**Moore, Mark Curtis:** Distribution of cocaine; Codington; November 22, 1989  
**Lowe, Scott Jay:** DUI-felony; Codington; February 22,1995  
**Charger, Larry Lee:** Burglary 3rd degree; Dewey; April 22, 1964  
**Rodney,Walter J.:** Distribution of a controlled substance; Beadle; September 27, 1984  
**Spicer, John W.:** D.W.I third offense; Marshall; July 18, 1997  
**Twite, Joshua:** Possession of controlled substance; Clay; February 28, 1997  
**Kleinsasser, Kenneth:** Driving while under the influence 3rd offense –felony; Codington; January 3, 1996  
**Schaeffer, Faith Petrik:** Petty theft 2nd degree; Davison; October 24, 2002  
**Foxhoven, David:** Petty theft; Yankton; December 23, 1985  
**Berry, Mathew:** Petty theft; display/possess altered I.D.; Clay; November 10, 1999;  
April 18, 2000  
**Egeland, Lisa (Slater):** Grand theft, felony; forgery, felony (two separate counts); Lawrence, Meade; January 6, 2005; October 20, 2005; October 24, 2005  
**Ronneberg, Chie:** Domestic violence, simple assault; Pennington; September 14, 2007  
**Groos, Darin E.:** Simple assault; Minnehaha; September 30, 1991  
**Harris, Sarah Marie:** 2 counts ingesting substances, possession of drug paraphernalia; Brookings, Lincoln; January 31, 2005; April 27, 2005; February 13, 2006

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A governor’s ability to change lives by granting pardons is not lost on Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

“There are some aspects of the governor’s job that are very ordinary,” Daugaard said. “You come in, sit at a desk, turn on a computer and read the mail. It’s like many other jobs across the state. This is one aspect of the job that is very different.”

This week the governor issued his first pardons since being elected. He granted executive clemency to 13 men and three women who had been convicted of crimes as long ago as 1964 and as recently as 2007. By pardoning them, he sealed their criminal records and restored their citizenship rights. Among other things, they can vote, own firearms, and they can apply for jobs or for admission to education institutions without being burdened by their criminal convictions.

“Even minor convictions can keep people from advancing professionally. It’s a huge deal,” Dave Nelson said of executive clemency. Nelson, the former Minnehaha County state’s attorney, is chairman of the Board of Pardons and Paroles that makes clemency recommendations to the governor.

Daugaard granted clemency to two people convicted of violent crimes. Chie Ronnenberg was convicted of domestic violence and simple assault in Pennington County in 2007, and Darin E. Groos was convicted of simple assault in Minnehaha County in 1991. The governor said it is “sobering” to review such cases.

“If you exercise judgment poorly, you could have a situation of granting freedom to someone who is a danger,” he said.

The remainder of pardons Daugaard granted were for DUI and drug convictions, and burglary and theft. Daugaard said he highly values the Pardons and Parole Board’s recommendations. His general counsel, Jim Seward, other lawyers in the governor’s office and Daugaard himself review every file.

“I read the whole file myself,” the governor said. “I look at the severity of the crime. I look at the time that has passed since the crime for which the pardon is being sought.”

Whenever possible, the parole board conducts face-to-face hearings with pardon applicants. While someone convicted of a minor offense who now lives across the country might elect to appeal for clemency by phone, in general “we encourage personal attendance of the applicant,” Nelson said. Two members of the board meet with an applicant. If they find the request for clemency has merit, the entire board meets with the person, Nelson said. These meetings are videotaped, and Daugaard has found those tapes valuable on several occasions “to get a sense of the person” before making a clemency decision.

“On a couple of occasions, I’ve loaded up the DVD and observed the person’s demeanor,” he said.

Three of the nine-member Pardons and Parole Board are appointed by the governor, three by the attorney general and three by the Supreme Court. Nelson, who was named to the board by Supreme Court Chief Justice David Gilbertson in 2009, values the independence.

“I am impressed the parole board is a citizen panel,” he said. The board “needs to be independent of the Department of Corrections. It needs to be independent from government and independent of the groups affiliated with applicants.”

Along with the clemency requests he granted, Daugaard also cut 30 to 60 days from the sentences of 270 men and women inmates. These sentence reductions reflect inmates’ avoidance of disciplinary problems and their willingness to take part in community service, such as battling the Missouri River floods this year. The time comes off the back of a sentence and consequently does not advance an inmate’s potential parole date.

“If you don’t end up being approved for parole and do serve a full sentence, this shortens that time,” Daugaard said. “If you do get paroled and fall into bad habits and get picked up for violating your parole, this again shortens your sentence.”

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