

H A R L A N · R I C H A R D S

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Governor Walker cuts funding for
Victims of Sexual Assault But Continues
To Fund Indefinite Warehousing of Prisoners

I was listening to the news this morning and heard that the justice department was cutting out funding for groups which assist victims of sexual assault because of budget constraints. This amazes me. That Governor Walker would take money away from groups that help victims of sexual assault is reprehensible. Many victims need counseling, perhaps medical attention and poor people without health insurance can't afford that on their own. What are they supposed to do? Feel better when their assailant is sent to prison for so long he will die in prison? I think victims would rather have some assistance dealing with the trauma of the ordeal.

But this isn't a choice between sending perpetrators of sex crimes to prison or helping their victims. There is plenty of money to do both. The problem is that the money which is available is being used to warehouse prisoners who have already spent decades in prison and no longer pose a threat to anyone. Thousands of prisoners who were sent to prison in the 1980s and earlier are languishing in prisons based on Governor Walker's policies.

I recently had a parole hearing where I was denied parole and given a 12 month defer. There are two interesting aspects of this decision: 1) A 12 month defer ensures that I cannot return to minimum security (even though I already spent 9 years in that status with extensive time out in the community without supervision); and 2) the commission member stated I had to serve more time in prison because the public wanted me in prison longer. I can only speculate that this conclusion was reached based on Governor Walker winning the election because it is the policy of the parole commission chairperson he appointed.

Thankfully, he is facing a recall and it looks like enough signatures will be gathered to force a new election in the summer or fall. He is so extreme and outside of the norm of the traditional values of Wisconsin's citizens that he has a strong likelihood of losing a recall election if the Democrats can field a decent candidate. I just hope Kathleen Falk doesn't run. Her involvement in the 2002 gubernatorial election saddled us with Jim Doyle - a Republican - and beating Peg Lautenschlager in the attorney general primary allowed Van Hollen to win (in 2008, I think). So Kathleen, do us a favor and stay home).