

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

January 7, 2019

The Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform
Policy Advisory Council

What is that, you may ask? Well, it's the council that Gov. Evers created to make recommendations on how to fix the criminal justice system. It contains 30 people and I recently reviewed the list. To be honest, I don't see how those people will ever gain a consensus on making meaningful changes.

There are 2 district attorneys and a former DA who is now a judge; 3 former DOC secretaries (only one of which is worth a darn in my opinion); 2 ex-supreme court justices (one good, one bad); 2 county sheriffs and a deputy - all from different counties; 4 circuit court judges; 3 attorneys; a state union rep.; a police ass'n. rep; and others.

The best appointees in my opinion are David Liners of WISDOM and Sarah Ferber of EXPO (an ex-prisoner organization). There are some other stellar members such as ex-state supreme court justice Louis Butler and Walter Dickey of the UW Law School.

Gov. Evers got it right by giving everyone a place at the table. But I can't see how such divergent interests will ever come together to make meaningful recommendations for change. How do you get 30 people together in one room and give everyone a voice? Who will chair the council? Who decides what proposals are considered? What does it take to adopt a proposal? A majority? Unanimity? I can see up to a dozen members but 30 people is going to be pandemonium.

Another problem I see is that it will take months if not years for recommendations to be ratified and presented to Gov. Evers. We need change now! We need a parole commission that bases its decisions on actual facts, not subjective opinion.

It's not great but it's much better than what we had under Scott Walker. Way to go, Tony!