

## **Letter: Board follows deportation rules**

To the editor

Published 7:58 p.m., Saturday, September 29, 2012

The Times Union in its editorial ("Dollars and Justice," Sept. 24) may have given readers the belief the state Parole Board is not functioning well and that taxpayers are being saddled with unnecessary costs for incarcerating deportable inmates. Neither is true.

Since 2004, when sentencing reforms gave fixed sentences to nonviolent drug offenders, the total number of inmates for whom the Parole Board determines parole has dropped by a third, for a total of 21 percent in 2011. Criticizing Gov. Andrew Cuomo for not filling five vacant positions on the 19-member Parole Board whose caseload has declined significantly and suggesting the board is not accountable ignores reality.

Regarding the release of deportable inmates, 2,219 foreign inmates have been released early and deported since 1996, saving taxpayers more than \$100 million. The story "Inmates stay, you pay," Sept. 16, noted that, last year, 60 of 77 considered eligible for release were turned over for deportation. In fact, since 2008, the Parole Board has an annual release rate of 77 percent for eligible deportable inmates, a rate much higher than the corresponding release rate for domestic inmates.

So, the Parole Board is not, as the Times Union editorial suggested, "loath" to release deportable inmates. The board follows the law that gives it discretion to grant release. Of 281 current eligible foreign inmates denied parole, 239 are violent felony offenders, guilty of murder, manslaughter, rape and kidnapping. While the Times Union may think these individuals deserve release for their offenses to go home and be free of any restriction, their victims, the prosecutors and sentencing judges disagree. Actually, one of the inmate sources for the story has been described by the Queens County district attorney as "an extremely violent person who is hard-wired to commit crimes" and "is not a candidate for reform."

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