

BRINGING COMMUTATIONS BACK TO LIFE(ERS) IN WYOMING

By Dan Fetsco, JD, MA

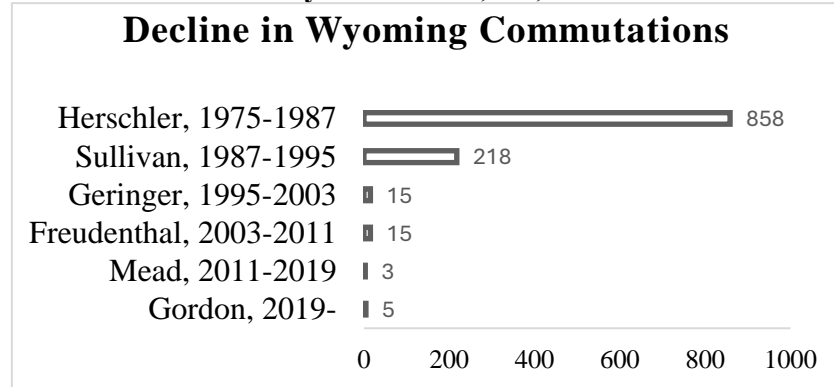


Figure A² Governor Mike Sullivan granted **218** commutations. Governor Dave Freudenthal granted **15** commutations, and Governor Matt Mead granted only **3**.

Governor Sullivan's Commutations for Lifers

- 31 inmates serving life sentences received commutations, and many received multiple commutations, making them gradually eligible for parole.
- 17 of the 31 inmates either died in prison or were successfully discharged from WDOC custody and parole.
- 6 are currently still on parole.
- 8 are still in prison, 2 having been returned for parole violations.
- Of the 2 lifers who were paroled and later returned to custody, neither committed another murder or crime punishable by life in prison.

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Support from Victims of Violent Crime

It is a popular misconception that all victims of violent crime want long sentences in every case. A 2022 survey conducted by the Prison Policy Initiative found that **52% of victims** believe a prison sentence will make a person more likely to commit crime, and **61%** prefer shorter sentences coupled with more spending on prevention and rehabilitative programs.³

Governor Freudenthal Expresses Regret

In a 2022 interview discussing commutations, Governor Freudenthal admitted: "I just had a bias against them that had been shaped by seven years as a prosecutor." He further added, "**I believe it's a tool that ought to be used more often.** You'd be surprised at how many people have convictions from their youth. I probably should have been more understanding.

¹ Fetsco, Dan, *Cutting Life Short*, expected publication in Fall 2024.

² Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner, "Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2022," *Prison Policy Initiative*, March 14, 2022, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2022.html>.