



State of New Jersey

STATE PAROLE BOARD

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PETER J. BARNES JR., CHAIRMAN

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Yolette Ross to Serve as Parole Board Vice-Chair Brings Commitment to Reentry and Public Safety

TRENTON – Peter J. Barnes Jr., Chairman of the New Jersey State Parole Board, today announced the appointment of Yolette Ross as the board’s Vice Chairwoman.

Ross’ public service career began in the community-based corrections field in 1980 when she became Salem County’s first African-American probation officer. She has served as a State Parole Board member since December 29, 2005 and replaces outgoing Vice Chairman Paul Contillo. Contillo will continue serving as a Parole Board member.

“Yolette Ross has demonstrated her commitment to helping ex-offenders reenter society as law-abiding, productive citizens,” Barnes said. “Her passion for finding innovative reentry methods, devotion to preventing crime, and ground-level background in probation, make her an excellent choice to be our new Vice-Chairwoman.”

“Paul Contillo deserves strong praise for his service as Vice Chairman under my predecessor, Judge John D’Amico. Mr. Contillo helped lead this agency with great integrity as it adopted new reforms and new practices aimed at improving public safety and the public’s trust,” Barnes continued.

Ross called her service on the Parole Board a homecoming to the field she entered as a probation officer.

“The State Parole Board’s crime prevention goes beyond the supervision of parolees. It includes helping offenders build legitimate careers and lives, to prevent them from committing new crimes,” Ross said. “I look forward to working with Chairman Barnes to help parolees start a new, productive and crime-free life when they reenter society.”

Ross is currently involved in the Parole Board’s Female Offender Reentry Group Effort, or FORGE, which provides direct links to employment training, family counseling and other services designed to meet the specific needs of female ex-offenders and their families. FORGE began with a pilot program in Newark, and the Board is making efforts to expand the program in southern New Jersey.

As Vice Chairwoman, Ross will continue her regular duties as a Parole Board member. The board members work in groups of two to conduct about 75 parole hearings per week, in which they decide whether inmates eligible for parole should be released under supervision, or should remain in prison until a new eligibility date is established. New Jersey law creates the presumption of parole, which places the burden on the Board members to determine whether the individual meets the standard for

release under supervision. Once each month the 14-member Parole Board meets as a whole to hold parole hearings for inmates convicted of murder.

The board members also meet with crime victims, or the close relatives of those who have been a victim of murder, to receive their testimony prior to parole hearings.

In her new role, Ross will to continue promoting reentry efforts; to build on recent reforms that have enhanced the Parole Board's accountability and efficiency; and to enhance the Board's visibility in reemployment programs across New Jersey.

Ross served as Deputy Chief of Staff to Governor Richard J. Codey. She is a member of the Gloucester County College Board of Trustees and the College's Foundation, a founding officer of the Salem County Rape Crisis Center, and president of the Deptford Township Library Board.

Ross graduated from William Patterson College in 1979, and went on to serve as a Salem County probation officer from 1980 to 1984. She was later hired as an investigator for the State Division of Gaming Enforcement, where she conducted background checks on prospective casino licensees. In 1999 she earned a Master of Arts in Public Relations from Rowan University.

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