



EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY MANUAL
Firearms & Pardons
Commutation of Life and Non-Life Sentences

April 2026

IOWA CODE: Firearms & Pardons

- **Codes to Refer to:**

- 914 Executive Clemency
- 914.7 details the offenses for which firearm possession is not permitted
- 724 are weapons offenses that mostly prohibit future possession
- 702.11 details what is considered a forcible felony

- **914.1 Powers of Governor:**

- The powers of the Governor under the Constitution of the State of Iowa to grant a reprieve, pardon, commutation of sentence, remission of fines and forfeitures, and restoration of the rights of citizenship.

- **914.3 Right of Application:**

- Except as otherwise provided in section 902.2, a person convicted of a criminal offense has the right to make application to the Board of Parole for recommendation or to the Governor for a reprieve, pardon, commutation of sentence, remission of fines or forfeitures, or restoration of rights of citizenship at any time following the conviction.

- **914.3 Recommendations by the Board of Parole:**

- Except as otherwise provided in section 902.2, the Board of Parole shall periodically review all applications by persons convicted of criminal offenses and shall recommend to the Governor the reprieve, pardon, commutation of sentence, remission of fines or forfeitures, or restoration of the rights of citizenship for persons who have by their conduct given satisfactory evidence that they will become or continue to be law-abiding citizens.
- The Board of Parole shall, upon request of the Governor, take charge of all correspondence in reference to an application filed with the Governor and shall, after careful investigation, provide the Governor with the Board's advice and recommendation concerning any person for whom the Board has not previously issued a recommendation.
- All recommendations and advice of the Board of Parole shall be entered in the proper records of the Board.

- **914.4 Response to Recommendation:**

- The Governor shall respond to all recommendations made by the Board of Parole within ninety days of the receipt of the recommendation. The response shall state whether the recommendation will be granted and shall specifically set out the reasons for such action. If the Governor does not grant the recommendation, the recommendation shall be returned to [Iowa Code 2020, Chapter 914 (13, 0) §914.4, CRIMINAL SENTENCE RELIEF AND RESTORATION OF RIGHTS 2] the Board of Parole and may be refiled with the Governor at any time. Any recommendation may be withdrawn by the Board of Parole at any time prior to its being granted. However, if the Board withdraws a recommendation, a statement of the withdrawal, and the reasons upon which it was based, shall be entered in the proper records of the Board.

- **914.7 Rights Not Restorable:**

- Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a person who has been convicted of a forcible felony, a felony violation of Chapter 124 involving a firearm, or a felony violation of Chapter 724 shall not have

the person's rights of citizenship restored to the extent of allowing the person to receive, transport, or possess firearms. Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter, a person seventeen years of age or younger who commits a public offense involving a firearm which is an aggravated misdemeanor against a person or a felony shall not have the person's rights of citizenship restored to the extent of allowing the person to receive, transport, or possess firearms.

- **702.11 Forcible Felony:**

- A "forcible felony" is any felonious child endangerment, assault, murder, sexual abuse, kidnapping, robbery, human trafficking, arson in the first degree, or burglary in the first degree.
- Notwithstanding subsection 1, the following offenses are not forcible felonies:
 - a. Willful injury in violation of section 708.4, subsection 2.
 - b. Sexual abuse in the third degree committed between spouses.
 - c. Sexual abuse in violation of section 709.4, subsection 1, paragraph "b", (3) subparagraph division (d)
 - d. Sexual exploitation by a counselor, therapist, or school employee in violation of section 709.15.
 - e. Child endangerment subject to penalty under section 726.6, subsection 6.
 - f. Assault in violation of section 708.2, subsection 4.
 - g. Domestic abuse assault in violation of section 708.2A, subsection 5.
 - h. Removal of an officer's communication or control device in violation of section 708.12, subsection 3, paragraph "f".

- **724.1 Offensive Weapons:**

- An offensive weapon is any device or instrumentality of the following types:
 - a. A machine gun. A machine gun is a firearm which shoots or is designed to shoot more than one shot, without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger.
 - b. Any weapon other than a shotgun or muzzle loading rifle, cannon, pistol, revolver or musket, which fires or can be made to fire a projectile by the explosion of a propellant charge, which has a barrel or tube with the bore of more than six-tenths of an inch in diameter, or [Thu Dec 05 12:14:07 2019 Iowa Code 2020, Chapter 724 (40, 3) §724.1, WEAPONS 2] the ammunition or projectile therefore, but not including antique weapons kept for display or lawful shooting.
 - c. A bomb, grenade, or mine, whether explosive, incendiary, or poison gas; any rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces; any missile having an explosive charge of more than one-quarter ounce; or any device similar to any of these.
 - d. A ballistic knife. A ballistic knife is a knife with a detachable blade which is propelled by a spring-operated mechanism, elastic material, or compressed gas.
 - e. Any part or combination of parts either designed or intended to be used to convert any device into an offensive weapon as described in paragraphs "a" through "d", or to assemble into such an offensive weapon, except magazines or other parts, ammunition, or ammunition components used in common with lawful sporting firearms or parts including but not limited to barrels suitable for refitting to sporting firearms.
 - f. Any bullet or projectile containing any explosive mixture or chemical compound capable of exploding or detonating prior to or upon impact, or any shotshell or

cartridge containing exothermic pyrophoric misch metal as a projectile which is designed to throw or project a flame or fireball to simulate a flamethrower.

- An offensive weapon or part or combination of parts therefore shall not include the following:
 - a. An antique firearm. An antique firearm is any firearm, including any firearm with a matchlock, flintlock, percussion cap, or similar type of ignition system, manufactured in or before 1898 or any firearm which is a replica of such a firearm if such replica is not designed or redesigned for using conventional rimfire or centerfire fixed ammunition or which uses only rimfire or centerfire fixed ammunition which is no longer manufactured in the United States and which is not readily available in the ordinary channels of commercial trade.
 - b. A collector's item. A collector's item is any firearm other than a machine gun that by reason of its date of manufacture, value, design, and other characteristics is not likely to be used as a weapon. The commissioner of public safety shall designate by rule firearms which the commissioner determines to be collector's items and shall revise or update the list of firearms at least annually.
 - c. Any device which is not designed or redesigned for use as a weapon; any device which is designed solely for use as a signaling, pyrotechnic, line-throwing, safety, or similar device; or any firearm which is unserviceable by reason of being unable to discharge a shot by means of an explosive and is incapable of being readily restored to a firing condition. [C27, 31, 35, §12960-b1; C39, §12960.01; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, §696.1; C71, 73, 75, 77, §696.1, 697.10, 697.11; C79, 81, §724.1

- **Eligibility:**

- Requirement: Five years since discharge for applicants to apply for their Special Restoration of Citizenship (Firearms) and ten years since discharge to apply for a Pardon.
- Applicants who have been convicted of a forcible felony (outlined in Ch. 124) that involved a firearm are not eligible to apply for their restoration of firearms. However, if eligible by time frame, they may apply for a full pardon and within that grant could possess firearms.
- Applicants with domestic abuse convictions are not eligible to apply for their restoration of firearms and would need to apply for a pardon (if period allowed). Even applicants whose original conviction was domestic abuse, but pled down to a different charge, must apply for a pardon to restore firearm rights.
- Applicants who have a conviction in Federal Court must apply through the U.S. Pardon Attorney.
- Applicants whose convictions were outside of Iowa must apply with the State they received their conviction from.
- If Applicants are denied, there is not a restriction on when they can apply again.

- **Process:** It may take approximately two years from the date the applicant submits an application to the Board of Parole.

- Board of Parole Staff will review and scan the applications.

IOWA CODE: Commutation of Life Sentences & Non-Life Sentences

- **Codes to refer to:**
 - 914 Executive Clemency
 - 902.2 Individuals serving a Life Sentence (Class A felony) are required to be interviewed by the Board of Parole as a component of their investigation.
- **914.3 Right of Application:**
 - Except as otherwise provided in section 902.2 a person convicted of a criminal offense has the right to make application to the Board of Parole for recommendation or to the Governor for a reprieve, pardon, commutation of sentence, remission of fines or forfeitures, or restoration of rights at any time following the conviction.
- **914.1 Powers of Governor:**
 - The powers of the Governor under the Constitution of the State of Iowa to grant a reprieve, pardon, commutation of sentence, remission of fines and forfeitures, and restoration of the rights of citizenship.
- **902.2 Commutation Procedure for Class “A” Felons:**
 - 902.2 Commutation procedure for class “A” felons. A person who has been sentenced to life imprisonment under section 902.1 may, no more frequently than once every ten years, make an application to the Governor requesting that the person’s sentence be commuted to a term of years. The Director of the Iowa Department of Corrections may make a request to the Governor that a person’s sentence be commuted to a term of years at any time. Upon receipt of a request for commutation, the Governor shall send a copy of the request to the Iowa Board of Parole for investigation and recommendations as to whether the person should be considered for commutation. The Board shall conduct an interview of the class “A” felon and shall make a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor.
- **Non-Class A Offenses & Applications:**
 - Individuals serving time with a mandatory minimum are not eligible for an annual review by the Board of Parole. Incarcerated individuals may apply for a commutation of sentence if they have not received a prior recommendation for or against commutation of their sentence.
- **Class A Offenses & Applications:**
 - If an individual is serving a life sentence, they may only make application once every ten years for a recommendation of commutation.
 - The Board considers the year requirement to be from the date the application is received by the Board, not the recommendation to the Governor or the decision of the Governor.
- **Commutation Application Processing:**
 - Application is received at the Iowa Board of Parole and scanned in by the Commutation Liaison.