Brown's parole plan a 'major change'

By Marla Diamond and Barry Gerber

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown will try to give more inmates a chance for early release under a major parole reform that he is expected to sign Thursday.

If Brown signs the bill, it's clear that his proposed ballot measure would result in offenders winning parole earlier than under the present process.

Sen. Claire Leopold, D-Martinez, said Thursday that she was “completely dejected” that Brown changed the tide.

“Now more than ever, the parole board is going to have to do its work,” she said.

But it remains far from clear that his proposed ballot measure would result in a decrease in inmates winning parole.

The California Senate on Tuesday approved a plan backed by Brown that would dramatically ease parole decisions.

It seems unlikely to see drapes of inmates free, experts say, but pressure could rise for plea bargaining.

The plan would give inmates who have served at least half of their sentence the chance of parole based on determining they are not likely to reoffend.

The proposal, which was negotiated with the California State Association of Counties, bars parolees from being found guilty of new crimes.

The measure, which is expected to come to a final showdown before Brown on Thursday, was passed by a vote of 24-16 in the Senate.

The proposal is expected to be sent to Brown for his signature, but it remains to be seen how often parole boards will grant inmates early release.

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