

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 51/35/99

23 February 1999

Further information on EXTRA 14/98 (AMR 51/08/98, 6 February 1998) and follow-ups (AMR 51/17/98, 5 March 1998, and AMR 51/17/98, 16 December 1998) - Death Penalty

USA (OHIO)Wilford Lee BERRY

---

Amnesty International regrets that Wilford Berry was executed as scheduled on 19 February 1999.

Ohio Governor Bob Taft refused to grant clemency. In a four-page statement, Taft said:"I find no compelling reason to grant clemency in this case, particularly given the heinous nature of the crime, the decision of the jury, the thorough and detailed appeals process upholding the conviction, Berry's admission of guilt and court rulings finding Mr. Berry competent to waive further appeals." The statement appears to ignore the evidence of Berry's mental problems and the fact that the courts had not thoroughly examined his conviction, as Berry had refused to continue with his legal appeals.

Taft did say that he felt compassion for Berry because of the "extremely unfortunate life circumstances that have contributed to his criminal tendencies."

In a newspaper interview following the execution, Governor Taft illustrated the brutalising effect executions have on those involved in the process. Taft said that he would never be the same in light of Wilford Berry's execution: "I think this will change me. I think a decision like this [not to grant clemency] is something that will be with me for the rest of my life."

Taft described the decision regarding clemency as a "lengthy and very difficult process...not a process I would wish on any governor. I'm sure this is one of the most difficult decisions that I will have to make as governor."

Thank you to all those who sent appeals on Wilford Berry's behalf. Letters expressing regret at Ohio's first execution since 1963 may be sent to Governor Taft (please note correct spelling).

**APPEALS TO:**

The Honorable Bob Taft  
Governor of Ohio  
77 South High Street, 30th Floor  
Columbus, OH 43266-0601  
USA

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

**Fax: +1 614 466 9354**

**Telephone: +1 614 466 3555**