

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 51/60/91
Distr: UA/SC

Please send one or two appeals per section

20 November 1991

Further information on EXTRA 52/91 (AMR 51/28/91, 16 August) and follow-ups AMR 51/55/91, 8 November, and AMR 51/30/91, 22 August - Death Penalty

USA (Louisiana):

Robert SAWYER

Robert Sawyer, who was scheduled to be executed by the state of Louisiana on 15 November 1991, has received an indefinite stay of execution from the United States Supreme Court. The Supreme Court issued the stay so it could consider Sawyer's petition for federal habeas corpus relief.

On 11 November the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Parole had recommended by 3 votes to 2 in favour of clemency after hearing extensive testimony regarding Robert Sawyer's mental retardation, brain disorder and history of mental illness. However, Governor Buddy Roemer refused to follow the Board's clemency recommendation. The execution would have been carried out, had it not been for the unexpected intervention by the United States Supreme Court.

The issue now before the Court is whether Robert Sawyer's well-documented history of mental disabilities and mental illness (which was not presented to the jury at his original trial) renders him "ineligible" for the death penalty.

Although the Governor failed to follow the Board's clemency recommendation, it is felt important to support the Board and encourage them to take a stand in similar cases in the future. Governor Roemer will be leaving office in December and will be replaced by Edwin Edwards.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: faxes/telephone calls/express and airmail letters:

Please send one or two appeals per section to the three members of the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Paroles who voted in favour of commuting Robert Sawyer's death sentence:

- commending them for their action;
- emphasizing the inappropriateness of executing people with mental handicaps.

APPEALS TO:

Ms Lynise Kennedy, Ms Sally McKissack, Mr S.P. Davies
Members, Louisiana Board of Pardons and Paroles
504 Mayflower Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802, USA

Dear Board Members

Faxes: + (504) 342 6593

Telephone: + (504) 342 5421

Telegrams: Louisiana Pardons Board, Baton Rouge,

Louisiana, USA

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the USA in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.