

PUBLIC

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20 May 2009

Further information on UA 124/09 (AMR 51/065/2009, 13 May 2009) – Death penalty

**USA (Missouri) Dennis James Skillicorn (m), white, aged 49**

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Dennis Skillicorn was executed in Missouri in the first few minutes of 20 May. He had been sentenced to death in 1996 for the murder of Richard Drummond in 1994.

In his final statement before being killed, Dennis Skillicorn apologized to the victim's family, saying that "for the last 15 years I've lived with the remorse of my actions". His clemency petition had sought commutation to life imprisonment without parole, on the grounds of his rehabilitation on death row and his positive work within the prison.

In a statement issued on 19 May, Governor Jay Nixon announced that he was denying clemency. He said that "the jury that convicted Dennis Skillicorn determined that he deserved the most severe punishment under Missouri law, and my decision on clemency upholds the jury's action".

Earlier, Governor Nixon's office had responded to those appealing for clemency. In a response from him to an appeal-writer in the UK dated 15 May, Governor Nixon said: "The death penalty in Missouri is sought sparingly by prosecutors, handed down sparingly by juries, and carried out sparingly by the state. After 16 years as Missouri's Attorney General, I fully appreciate the gravity and finality of capital punishment. I will carefully review the record on this case and any petition for clemency submitted by Dennis Skillicorn. At a time when the focus is on the person found guilty of murder, I also ask that Missourians remember Richard Drummond, the victim of this crime, and keep his family in their prayers."

There have been 29 executions in the USA this year, and 1,165 since judicial killing resumed there in 1977. Missouri accounts for 67 of these executions. This was the first execution in Missouri since October 2005.

**NO FURTHER ACTION BY THE UA NETWORK IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.**