

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1302

SUBCOMMITTEES:
LABOR-HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES-EDUCATION
FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING
AND RELATED PROGRAMS

June 29, 2007

State Board of Pardon and Paroles
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 458, Balcony Level, East Tower
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4909

Fax: 404-651-8502

Dear Chairperson Hunt and Board Members:

Re: Troy Davis

I appeal to you to commute the death sentence of Troy Anthony Davis, whose judicial appeals are almost exhausted. Mr. Davis has been on death row in Georgia for more than 15 years for the murder of a police officer he maintains that he did not commit. He was convicted in 1991 of fatally shooting Officer Mark McPhail and was also convicted for the non-lethal shooting of Michael Cooper and the assault of Larry Young at the same crime scene. Both Cooper and Young now deny knowing who the perpetrator in their attacks was. Davis' conviction was not based on any physical evidence, and the murder weapon was never found.

Despite mounting evidence that Davis may in fact be innocent of the crime, appeals to courts to consider this evidence have been repeatedly denied for procedural reasons. Instead, the prosecution based its case on the testimony of purported "witnesses," many of whom allege police coercion, and most of whom have since recanted their testimony. One witness signed a police statement declaring that Davis was the assailant then later said "I did not read it because I cannot read." In another case a witness stated that the police "were telling me that I was an accessory to murder and that I would...go to jail for a long time and I would be lucky if I ever got out, especially because a police officer got killed...I was only sixteen and was so scared of going to jail." There are also several witnesses who have implicated another man in the crime but the police focused their efforts on convicting Troy.

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Despite these compelling facts, Mr. Davis' habeas corpus petition was denied by the state court on a technicality -- evidence of police coercion was "procedurally defaulted" so the court refused to hear it. The Georgia Supreme Court and 11th Circuit Federal Court of Appeals deferred to the state court and rejected Davis' claims. It is shocking that in over 12 years of appeals, no court has agreed to hear evidence of police coercion, or consider the recanted testimony. On Monday, June 25, The United States Supreme Court refused to grant certiorari in Mr. Davis' case. All of his avenues of judicial relief have now been exhausted and an execution date has been set for the week of July 16th.

It is deeply troubling to me that Georgia might proceed with this execution given the strong claims of innocence in this case. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that our criminal justice system is not devoid of error and we now know that 124 individuals have been released from death rows across the United States due to wrongful conviction. We must confront the unalterable fact that the system of capital punishment is fallible, given that it is administered by fallible human beings. I respectfully urge the Board of Pardons and Paroles to demonstrate your strong commitment to fairness and justice and commute the death sentence of Troy Anthony Davis.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress