

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Texas Set to Execute Inmate Convicted under Texas “Law of Parties” who did not  
Actually Commit Murder**

**Inmate, who Suffers from Mental Illness, Scheduled for Execution Thursday  
August 21, 2008**

*Austin* - Lawyers for Jeff Wood are asking Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to commute Wood’s sentence from death to life in prison or for Governor Perry to grant a 30-day reprieve from execution. It is undisputed that Jeff Wood did not kill the victim in this case, but rather was outside the building in a car at the time of the murder. The actual killer, Daniel Reneau, was already executed by the State of Texas in 2002.

The clemency petition can be found at:  
[http://www.texasdefender.org/woodptnclemency\\_filed20080804.pdf](http://www.texasdefender.org/woodptnclemency_filed20080804.pdf)

Jeffery Lee Wood was convicted and sentenced to death as a party for the death of Kriss Keeran in Kerr County, Texas. Mr. Wood was convicted under Texas’ “law of parties” statute that allows for the conviction of participants in a crime even if they do not know a murder will be committed or commit murder themselves.

Wood has never taken a human life by his own hands. Keeran’s unfortunate death was the result of a reckless scheme devised to steal the money that had accumulated in a Kerrville convenience store over a holiday weekend. Reneau armed himself, entered the store, and shot the victim. Wood was involved in the robbery in this case because of his longstanding mental illness that allowed him to be easily manipulated by the principal actor, Daniel Reneau. Wood’s emotional and psychological impairments, including his intellectual limitations, diminished Wood’s capacity to anticipate what Daniel Reneau would do inside the convenience store.

At the punishment phase of the trial, influenced by his mental health issues, Mr. Wood directed his lawyers not to present any evidence in his defense. Mr. Wood’s attorneys made no cross examination of any of the State’s witnesses. They presented no evidence or witnesses on Mr. Wood’s behalf. And they offered no reasons or arguments why the twelve people sitting on Mr. Wood’s jury should extend mercy to him and spare his life. Wood’s mental illness was a critical element at trial and in 1997, Wood was initially found incompetent to stand trial. Mr. Wood suffers today from the same psychological and emotional impairments for which a jury found him incompetent to stand trial in 1997.

He has never received psychiatric or mental health care for these impairments. The same deficiencies that prevented Mr. Wood from communicating with his trial lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding prevent Mr. Wood from having a rational understanding of his death sentence and impending execution. Therefore, Mr. Wood is potentially incompetent to be executed and his lawyers have filed a motion for counsel and experts to be appointed to evaluate his competency.

A neuropsychologist who evaluated Wood's competence to stand trial said that Mr. Wood "ha[d] a delusional system, an inability to grasp the reality surrounding the issues specific to this case, his role in it, in the crime, as well as other things that present a direct threat to his own well-being, his own sense of self."

Further, Mr. Wood's clean prison record justifies a grant of clemency to life in prison and demonstrates the reality that he is not dangerous and is not a threat either to other inmates or to prison officers.

The last time a person was executed in the United States who did not participate directly in killing another human being was 1996. Mr. Wood's death sentence is unjust and must not be permitted to be carried out. This case is strikingly similar to the Kenneth Foster case in which Governor Perry followed the Board of Pardon and Parole's recommendation to commute his sentence to life. Foster too had been convicted under the law of parties but had not been the actual triggerman. For the same reasons, Wood's sentence should be commuted to life in prison.

Mr. Wood undeniably shares responsibility for what happened to Mr. Keeran, and should be held accountable for his reckless acts, but no man ever deserves to die for another man's acts. Justice was served in this case when the State of Texas executed Daniel Reneau on June 13, 2002; the continued imprisonment of Mr. Wood will continue to serve justice.

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