



CRIME VICTIMS UNITED OF CALIFORNIA

California Supreme Court Decision Makes it Easier for Lifers to Obtain Parole

“CVUC is distraught over this misguided court ruling. The courts have in essence taken this critical responsibility out of the hands of the executive branch and set a precedent that will surely have detrimental public safety impacts as they’ve altered the legal standard for denying parole and limited the governor’s discretion in these cases.

“The U.S. Supreme Court has noted that about 90% of all prisoners are found unsuitable for parole at the initial hearing, while 85% are found unsuitable at the second and subsequent hearings. The State Court’s determination undermines this important finding. Furthermore, as a victim who has been through a number of parole hearings for my family’s offender and other victims’ offenders across the state, I can tell you that the court’s determination fails to acknowledge that a number of the offenders this ruling will affect are psychopaths and sociopaths that have become astutely aware of how to game the system to achieve a parole outcome in their favor. The failure of the courts to acknowledge that the crime itself is clear indication of the offender’s risk to public safety will surely prove disastrous to many more Californians who will fall victim to these offenders when they are released.

“Additionally, there are a number of people currently in prison for murder who were originally sentenced to death whose sentence was changed to life with possibility of parole. We don’t really expect that Charles Manson is likely to be granted parole, but under this new standard it is not implausible to believe that these types of individuals could be paroled if they behave themselves for a few years leading up to their parole hearing.

“Sadly, our opponents will not admit that we are not attempting to extract every ounce of flesh in retribution, but merely trying to make sure that psychopaths and sociopaths do not move in next door to you. Shame on them!

“This decision devalues and dishonors victims and their families – the only ones who will be punished and truly provided a life sentence.”

“This ruling illustrates beyond a shadow of a doubt why Marsy’s Law – Proposition 9 – is so critical for victims in California. Marsy’s Law, among other things, will enhance a number of victims’ rights and limit the frequency of parole hearings for those individuals that are found unsuitable resulting in parole denial. Marsy’s Law is aimed at addressing this issue specifically and would provide immense relief for victims and their families, particularly in light of this ruling that will make it much more difficult for the Executive Branch to overturn a decision to grant parole by the Board. Vote **YES** on Proposition 9 when it is before you on the November 4th ballot.”

~ Harriet C. Salarno
President/Chair
Crime Victims United of California