

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 19, 2009

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TCADP Executive Director Kristin Houle issued the following statement in response to Governor Rick Perry's decision to reject the recommendation of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to commute Robert Lee Thompson's sentence to life in prison:

"The Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP) is outraged that Governor Perry has rejected the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles recommendation to commute the death sentence of Robert Lee Thompson. Thompson is scheduled to be executed this evening for the murder of Mansoor Rahim, even though he was not the triggerman. His co-defendant, Sammy Butler, the actual killer of Mr. Rahim, was tried separately and convicted on a lesser charge. Butler is serving a life sentence and will be eligible for parole.

This was only the fourth such recommendation for clemency from the Board in cases where the inmate faced imminent execution, but it constitutes the second time that Governor Perry has chosen to ignore the Board, whose members he appoints. Perry previously rejected a recommendation for clemency by the Board in 2004 when he allowed the execution of Kelsey Patterson, an inmate with severe mental illness, to proceed.

The Governor's decision comes at a time of increased public awareness and scrutiny of the flaws and failures of the Texas death penalty system. TCADP joins with a growing chorus of diverse voices, including those of law enforcement, religious leaders, murder victim family members, and state legislators in calling for an end to this arbitrary and error-prone form of punishment."

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