

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TCADP Calls for “Statewide Day of Action” on Anniversary of Willingham Execution**  
*State poised to carry out execution in another case with lingering questions*

(Austin, Texas) – Today, February 17, 2010, marks the sixth anniversary of the execution of Cameron Todd Willingham in 2004. Despite ongoing doubts about the forensic evidence used to obtain Willingham’s conviction, the State of Texas is poised to carry out another execution in a case for which many unresolved questions remain.

On February 24th, Henry “Hank” Skinner may be put to death, even though key pieces of DNA evidence that were collected from the crime scene in 1993 have never been tested. In fact, the State of Texas has refused to conduct testing of this evidence for the past 10 years. Hank Skinner has vigorously protested his innocence since the time of his arrest for the murders of Twila Busby and her two adult sons.

The Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP), a statewide grassroots membership organization based in Austin, has designated February 17 a “Statewide Day of Action.” It has called on its thousands of members and supporters to contact their elected officials to express concerns about the cases of Cameron Todd Willingham and Hank Skinner. In particular, TCADP has urged supporters to contact Governor Rick Perry to request clemency for Skinner so that critical DNA testing can be conducted.

In the Willingham case, serious questions remain as to the circumstances of the fire that led to the deaths of his three young daughters in 1991. Nine fire experts - including one hired by the Texas Forensic Science Commission - have examined the case since the time of conviction and determined that the evidence did not support the finding of arson. An investigation last year by journalist David Grann debunked all the evidence used to convict Willingham, and an inquiry by the Texas Forensic Science Commission is still pending.

“The State of Texas cannot afford to create another Cameron Todd Willingham,” said Kristin Houlé, TCADP Executive Director. “We urge the Governor not to turn a blind eye once again as he did on this day in 2004 when he ignored possibly exculpatory evidence in Willingham’s case. He still has the opportunity to do the right thing in Skinner’s case and prevent the execution of a possibly innocent man.”

Since 1973, 138 people in 26 states – including 11 in Texas -- have been released from death row due to evidence of their wrongful conviction. DNA evidence played a substantial role in 17 of these cases.

For additional background on the Skinner case, visit the Medill Innocence Project: <http://www.medillinnocenceproject.org/skinner>. For more information on the TCADP Statewide Day of Action, go to <http://tcadp.org/index.php?page=statewide-day-of-action>.

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