



Oklahoma State Senate
President Pro Tempore
Senator Lonnie Paxton

To the Members of the Pardon and Parole Board:

I write today in the strongest possible opposition to any consideration of parole for Verna Stafford.

Verna Stafford is not simply a violent criminal. She was convicted for her role in one of the most horrific mass murders in Oklahoma history. There are no conditions, circumstances or arguments that can justify recommending her release.

The victims were innocent people who went to work one day and never returned home. Because of her actions, families were robbed of parents, children, spouses and loved ones. They have missed birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, holidays and countless moments that can never be restored. Their life sentence did not end after a trial or with a court's judgment. They continue to live with the consequences of these murders every single day.

That is why this case is different. The question before the Pardon and Parole Board should not be whether enough time has passed or what conditions might accompany parole. The question is whether justice demands that someone responsible for crimes of this magnitude ever be recommended for release.

The answer is no.

I have disagreed with decisions of the Pardon and Parole Board in the past and have often chosen to express those concerns privately.

I cannot remain silent on this case.

Even considering parole for Verna Stafford is an injustice to the victims and their families. Before you cast your vote, I ask each of you to read these names and the ages at which they were murdered:

Melvin Lorenz, 38
Linda Lorenz, 31
Richard Lorenz, 12
Louis Zacarias, 43
Isaac Freeman, 56
David Lindsay, 17
David Salsman, 16
Terri Horst, 15
Anthony Tew, 17

These are not just names on a case file. They were fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, friends and neighbors. They are the people whose lives were stolen. Their families continue to bear the weight of that loss every day.



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When you vote, remember them. Remember the families who have already endured nearly five decades without the people they loved most. Ask yourself whether you can look those families in the eye and explain why the person convicted for her role in these murders deserves a recommendation for parole.

I respect and greatly appreciate the work the members of the Pardon and Parole Board undertake and understand the hard decisions you must make on these cases that impact the lives of individuals who come before you. It is not lost on me that these are not easy decisions. To those members of the board who voted against advancing this case, thank you for honoring the victims and their families.

To every member who will vote in the next stage of this process, I ask you to reject any recommendation for parole.

Do not force these families to relive their unimaginable loss once again. Do not compound their grief by suggesting these crimes have been sufficiently answered by the passage of time.

Justice requires more than remembering the victims. It requires standing with them.

I urge you to vote no.

Respectfully,

Lonnie Paxton
Senate President Pro Tempore

Warren Hamilton
Senate Public Safety Chairman