

Doctor says Thompson is not fit for execution

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By Clint Confehr

A doctor who's monitored the mental health of the confessed and convicted killer of a former *Shelbyville Times-Gazette* reporter has issued another statement to counter "misinterpretations" that the man on death row is competent to be executed.

"Although Mr. [Gregory] Thompson will sometimes acknowledge his involvement in the murder of Brenda Lane as he did on July 28 ... he simultaneously and irrationally believes that Ms. Lane is still alive and that he has paid her family money," wrote Dr. Faye Sultan.

Thompson was convicted nearly 20 years ago by a Coffee County jury for stabbing Lane to death in 1985 after abducting her to get a car so he and his girlfriend could drive to Georgia.

Aspects of Thompson's case have been considered by the U.S. Supreme Court which ruled an appellate judge overstepped his authority by calling for reexamination of Thompson's mental health.

Subsequently, motions in state court have resulted in the Tennessee Supreme Court to set Feb. 7 as Thompson's execution date.

His pending death has become a cause for the Tennessee Coalition to Abolish State Killing and there have been a series of motions including one asking the state's high court to recommend Gov. Phil Bredesen grant clemency.

The federal public defenders office has argued there's been a substantial decline in Thompson's sanity and claims that he's not competent to be executed.

Attorney General Paul Summers' office says two things must be shown to legally find someone competent for execution: That they know execution is going to happen and why that is the goal.

Dr. Sultan wrote to the state Supreme Court on Tuesday to add to her affidavit about Thompson's condition. She said she's monitored Thompson's mental health since 1998 and issued her supplemental statement "to correct misinterpretations of my report" by Associate Deputy Attorney General Jennifer L. Smith.

Smith had said motions to stop Thompson's execution failed because it showed he knows he's going to be executed and why.

"Thompson is not presently competent to be executed," Sultan said. "He lacks the mental capacity to understand the fact of the impending execution and the reason for it..."

"Thompson suffers from a severe psychotic mental illness," she said, adding, "...Thompson's mental health has changed and become substantially worse."

He's experienced more recent "breakthrough" hallucinations and an increase in severe suicidal thoughts, she wrote.

"Thompson continues to believe his execution is impossible," she said.

Previously, she said he's thought that while the murder was in Tennessee, he's federal property because of his status in the Navy and the Secretary of the Navy will allow a mistrial. That, he believes will lead to a discharged and his move to Hawaii.

Thompson was dishonorably discharged from the Navy.

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