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March 16, 1993

BY HAND

The Honorable L. Douglas Wilder
Governor of Virginia
Office of the Governor
State Capitol Building - 3rd Floor
Ninth and Grace Streets
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Re: **Syvasky Lafayette Poyner**

Dear Governor Wilder:

Syvasky Poyner is scheduled to be executed on March 18, 1993, for five murders committed in 1984. In the decade that has elapsed since the aberrational eleven-day period in which he committed his crimes, Syvasky has been a model prisoner. He has avoided disturbances, and, by his example, endeavored to keep other members of the prison population calm during moments of potential unrest. His disciplinary record reflects only two minor infractions: committee findings that he twice tore judicial decisions out of law books. (See Exhibits 1 and 2 attached hereto.)

Syvasky is a member of the vast majority of capital offenders who, in the custodial setting, "adhere to the rules, become involved in prison programs, and are not violent threats to other inmates or custodial staff."¹ He is not seeking to be released from prison. He is merely petitioning to have his sentence commuted to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. For nine years he has been cooperative, polite, docile, and extremely appreciative of all efforts made on his behalf and all kindnesses directed toward him. It is clear that he presents no threat to society while institutionalized.

¹See Radelet and Marquart, "Assessing Nondangerousness During Penalty Phases of Capital Trials," 54 Albany L.R. 845, 859 (1990), attached hereto as Exhibit 3.

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When I talked to Syvasky today, he said that he knows he is a different person today than he was in the past. He is deeply remorseful for having brought such great suffering to his victims and their families. If he could talk to the victims' families, he would say: "I'm sorry for the hurt and pain that I caused you and your family. I ask that you please forgive me for all the wrong I have done. Would you please forgive me for all that I have done?"

Reflecting upon his life, Syvasky has written the following prayer:

Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit go back in my memory as I sleep. Every hurt that has been done to me, heal that hurt. Every hurt that I have ever caused to another person, heal that hurt. All the relationships that have been damaged in my whole life that I'm not aware of, heal those relationships. But, Lord, if there is anything that I need to do, if I need to speak to a person because he or she is still suffering from my hand, bring to my awareness that person. I choose to forgive. And I ask to be forgiven whatever bitterness may be in my heart, Lord, and fill the empty spaces with your love. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

For the foregoing reasons, Syvasky Poyner hereby petitions that his death sentences be commuted to life imprisonment.

Respectfully yours,



Alexander H. Slaughter

AHS/gw

Enclosures

cc: Harry M. Johnson, III, Esquire (w/encls.)