

Governor Grants Paula Sims Commutation That Makes Her Eligible For Parole, Haine To Protest Any Parole Requests

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EDWARDSVILLE - Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker granted Paula Sims, 61, an Alton woman who admitted killing her two infant daughters after they were kidnapped in the 1980s, a commutation that now makes her eligible for parole. However, Madison County State's Attorney Thomas Haine today spoke out against the decision and said he will strongly protest parole for her at any parole hearings.

Sims has served a life sentence without parole for the murder of 6-week-old Heather. Heather's body was found in May 1989 in a trash can in West Alton by a fisherman. Sims admitted after the conviction that she killed her first daughter, Lorelei, a newborn, three years earlier, when the family lived in Brighton.

Sims is presently imprisoned at the Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln, IL. Sims and her former husband, Robert, also had a son, Randall, their second child. Robert Sims divorced her after she was convicted.

Jed Stone has been a long-time attorney for Sims. In the request to the governor for clemency, the attorney said she killed both infants suffering from postpartum psychosis.

Postpartum depression is defined as a medical condition that occur after pregnancy which is a mood disorder that can affect both sexes. Key symptoms are extreme sadness, low energy, anxiety, crying episodes, irritability, and sleeping or eating changes.

Madison County State's Attorney Haine plans to be tough on parole murder commutation requests in general. He said that is part of what he was clear about in his campaign.

"Postpartum depression is a complicated issue," Haine said. "Frankly, postpartum depression wasn't as understood in the 1990s. It is a complicated issue. We don't believe they should mitigate her life stance and that would allow her to go on parole. We have already responded to other prisoner review board requests in a complete manner. Before, we feel the office was routinely ignoring those. We are opposed to convicted murderers' pleas to get out early."

For years, Sims has requested clemency. Something notable, in 2006, Randall Sims, her ex-husband, argued against her release. Randall died at age 63 on June 25, 2015, with son Randall Sims, 27, in their sport-utility Jeep that was forced off an interstate overpass in Mississippi.

Gov. Pritzker's commutation adjusts Sims' sentence to parole-eligible. This means Paula will be eligible for a parole hearing in front of the Prisoner Review Board, the governor's office said this week. The governor's office said at that hearing, a majority of members would have to agree to release her on parole.

“If that doesn’t happen, she will remain incarcerated until her next parole hearing,” Gov. Pritzker’s office said.

Paula’s attorney Stone said he is hoping to see his client walk free sometime by 2022. He says he has received many letters from Paula’s friends and postpartum depression experts who sent support for Pritzker’s decision.

Madison County State’s Attorney Haine said while he understands her claim of postpartum suffering. However, he said in firm fashion: “When someone takes a life it should mean life in prison and that is what we intend to argue before the prison review board.”