

Convicted Murderer Of Her Two Children Paula Sims Will Walk Free On Parole After Prisoner Review Board Decision

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ST. LOUIS – After 30 years, long-imprisoned Paula Sims, convicted of murder, will now walk free after a decision granted today by the Illinois Prisoner Review Board granted parole today.

She has served recently at the Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln, IL., and is now 62 years old. Sims has served a life sentence without parole for the murder of her 6-week-old daughter, Heather, and another daughter, Lorelei. Heather's body was found in May 1989 in a trash can in West Alton by a fisherman. She admitted after the conviction, she also killed her first daughter, Lorelei, a newborn, three years earlier, when her family lived in Brighton.

Sims' attorney, Jed Stone, requested to Gov. J.B. Pritzker for clemency and said she killed both infants suffering from postpartum psychosis. Pritzker granted the commutation to Sims in March 2021 making her eligible for parole. The governor's office adjusted Sims' sentence to parole-eligible. The governor's office said at that time, a majority of Prisoner Review Board members would have to agree to release her on parole, which led to today's announcement.

Following the Oct. 28 Illinois Prisoner Review Board vote to release Paula Sims, the Senate Republican members of the Senate Executive Appointments Committee (State Senators Jason Plummer, Terri Bryant, and Steve McClure) released the following statement:

“Yet again, the 14-member Prisoner Review Board, 10 of which are acting and serving unconfirmed, has voted to release another individual who has committed heinous, unspeakable crimes. It’s the gravity of these crimes and the heavy responsibility that these board members hold that make it vital and imperative that they go through the constitutionally-required vetting process and come before the Illinois Senate for confirmation.

“Governor Pritzker is circumventing that process to avoid transparency and legislative oversight over his hand-picked appointees, and his allies in the legislature are complicit in allowing him to do so. To make matters worse, the Pritzker-appointed Prisoner Review Board hasn’t posted their meeting minutes since March, breaking the statutory requirements set forth by the Open Meetings Act. Not only are 71 percent of the members of the Board being protected from Senate questioning, but their votes are also being hidden from the public.”

The state senators continued with more: "The people of Illinois deserve to know that due diligence is being performed on the individuals making parole decisions. Right now they have no reason to believe that is happening.”

Sims was considered for early release because of a new Illinois law that gives women a chance for a re-sentencing hearing if they suffered from a maternal mental illness.

A pair of psychologists told the prisoner review board Sims was suffering from a rare disorder called "Postpartum Psychosis." However, Sims did not use Postpartum Psychosis as a defense at her 1990 trial.

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine previously sent a strong letter to the Prisoner Review Board against Sims' release:

"This office has received notice of a parole hearing for Paul Sims, Inmate #B07074. We strongly oppose granting of parole for Ms. Sims on behalf of the two child victims in the case, Heather and Lorelei Sims. Simply put, the Defendant's conveniently timed (and previously litigated) psychological explanations for the murder (now admitted, then denied) of her two baby children provide no basis to overturn her life sentence and give her parole. As Justice Kuehn put it: "Paula J. Sims gave birth to three children, but she was a mother to only one. Rather than nurture her two baby girls, she killed them." People v Sims, 322 Ill. App. 3d 397, 399 (Ill. App. Ct. 2001). The PRB and Governor should trust the judgment and sentence of the Court who heard all the relevant facts in the case and observed the demeanor of the Defendant. Paula Sims' life sentence imposed for murdering her two infant daughters, should be allowed to stand."