

KS argues for Lansing man's execution

(MSC News)--The U.S. Department of Justice should be allowed to carry out the scheduled executions of five federal death row inmates who have exhausted their appeals, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt told the U.S. Supreme Court Tuesday. According to a news release from Schmidt, one of the inmates faces a federal death sentence involving a rape and murder in Leavenworth County.

In a legal brief filed Tuesday, Schmidt and 13 other state attorneys general backed the Justice Department's request to allow the executions to proceed. The scheduled executions have been blocked by a lower federal court, which found that a new Federal Bureau of Prisons protocol for lethal-injections, which replaced the former three-drug procedure with a single drug, likely exceeds BOP's authority under federal law. The Justice Department has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to intervene, and the state attorneys general supporting the Department argue that the single-dose protocol has been successfully implemented by several states and has survived constitutional challenges. They also argue that both the government and crime victims have an interest in the finality and carrying out of just and lawful criminal sentences that have been upheld by appellate courts.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr announced in July that the Justice Department would schedule executions of federal inmates who have exhausted all appeals and whose convictions and death sentences have been affirmed. Before the lower-court injunction, the first execution was scheduled to occur December 9.

One of the five inmates scheduled for execution is 67-year-old Lansing resident Wesley Ira Purkey. Purkey was scheduled to be executed December 13 after being convicted in federal court in 2003 of the 1998 kidnapping, rape and murder of a 16-year-old Missouri girl in his Lansing home. He was found guilty of the federal crime by a jury in the Western District of Missouri after having previously pleaded guilty in Kansas state court to the murder of 80-year-old Mary Ruth Bales of Kansas City, Kansas.

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