

Virginia General Assembly



May 10, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor's Office
1111 E Broad St
Richmond VA 23219-1934

VIA EMAIL

Dear Governor Northam:

As the immediate past chairmen of the House and Senate Courts of Justice Committees, and Republican Leaders of the House and Senate, we urge your immediate and direct intervention to halt the planned release of Vincent Martin scheduled for tomorrow, May 11.

The circumstances of Mr. Martin's horrific crime are widely known. The evidence presented at his trial showed that he shot Richmond Police Officer Michael Connor and, after Officer Connor fell to the ground, Mr. Martin emptied the rounds remaining in his weapon into Officer Connor at point blank range.

Although flawed jury instructions led to Mr. Martin's initial conviction being set aside, he was convicted a second time and sentenced to life in prison.

That the Parole Board would even consider Mr. Martin a suitable candidate for release is cause for serious concern. But having been made aware recently of some highly irregular actions surrounding the Parole Board's decision to release Mr. Martin, we believe further investigation is necessary before allowing his release.

When Mr. Martin was considered for parole last year, his release was not recommended. We have been given no clear information regarding the Parole Board's abrupt reversal on Mr. Martin's suitability for release. More disturbingly, we have been alerted of several decisions and actions taken by the Parole Board that have raised concerns by the family of Officer Connors and the Richmond Police Department. Chief among these concerns is an alleged ongoing investigation by the Office of the Inspector General's into potential procedural and/or legal violations by the Parole Board related to Mr. Martin's case.

In our view, an ongoing investigation of the circumstances surrounding the decision by the Parole Board to release Mr. Martin mandates his release be halted, if not indefinitely, at least until the Inspector General's findings are completed. Therefore, we urge you to stay the release of Vincent Martin immediately.

The urgency of our request cannot be overstated. Absent an immediate intervention by you, Vincent Martin walks free tomorrow. We owe it to the victim's family, to the Richmond Police Department, and to all Virginians to ensure that the process of granting parole is consistently legal, fair, and just.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this time-sensitive matter. We hope to receive confirmation that Vincent Martin's release has been stayed, at least until the procedure and actions surrounding his release are fully investigated.

Respectfully yours,



Mark D. Obenshain
Senate Courts of Justice Committee
Immediate Past Chairman



Robert B. Bell
House Courts of Justice Committee
Immediate Past Chairman



Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Senate Republican Leader



C. Todd Gilbert
House Republican Leader