

TIME LINE

Illinois Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment

- **NOVEMBER 13 - 15, 1998** - 35 death row exonerees gather at Northwestern University's School of Law for the National Conference on Wrongful Convictions and the Death Penalty. The conference attracts national and international attention as it exposes the risks inherent in death penalty statutes.
- **MARCH 11, 1999** - Illinois death row inmate Anthony Porter's sentence is officially reversed. He was released in February 1999 after another man confessed on videotape to the 1982 double murder that sent Porter to death row. Charges were filed against the other man, who claimed he killed in self-defense. The case was broken by investigator Paul Ciolino working with Prof. David Protes and journalism students from Northwestern University. Their investigation also found that another witness had been pressured by police to testify against Porter. Porter came within 2 days of execution in 1998 and was only spared because the court wanted to look into his mental competency. Porter has an IQ of 51.
- **NOVEMBER 14-18, 1999** - *Chicago Tribune* reporters Ken Armstrong and Steve Mills publish a groundbreaking series of articles entitled "The Failure of the Death Penalty in Illinois." Their five-part series exposed serious flaws in Illinois's death penalty system and is often referred to by Governor George Ryan as he openly questions the fairness of the state's death penalty policies. The articles by Mills and Armstrong contribute to a shift in public opinion about capital punishment that is sweeping the country.
- **JANUARY 31, 2000** - Republican Governor George Ryan declares a moratorium on executions after raising concerns about a death penalty system "so fraught with error that it has come close to the ultimate nightmare." Ryan announces that he will also form a state commission to examine the administration of the death penalty in Illinois. Prior to his announcement, Illinois had released 13 condemned inmates from death row since 1977, and it had executed 12.

ILLINOIS EXONEREES SINCE 1974*

1987

Perry Cobb
Darby (Williams) Tillis

1994

Joseph Burrows

1995

Rolando Cruz
Alejandro Hernandez

1996

Verneal Jimerson
Dennis Williams
Gary Gauger
Carl Lawson

1999

Anthony Porter
Steven Smith
Ronald Jones

2000

Steve Manning

**Illinois re-enacted its current death penalty statutes on July 1, 1974.*

- MARCH 9, 2000** - Governor names former federal **Judge Frank McGarr**, former **U.S. Senator Paul Simon** and former **U.S. Attorney Thomas Sullivan** to chair his 14-member Commission on Capital Punishment. Ryan announces that the group will also include:

 - Rita Fry**, *Lake County State's Attorney*
 - Mike Waller**, *Lake County State's Attorney*
 - Roberto Ramirez**, *Founder and president of Tidy International*
 - Scott Turow**, *Attorney and best-selling author of legal novels*
 - Tom Needham**, *Chief of Staff for Chicago Police Superintendent Terry Hillard*
 - Bill Martin**, *Former Cook County prosecutor*
 - Donald Hubert**, *Attorney formerly with the Attorney General's Office*
 - Theodore Gottfried**, *State Appellate Defender for the State of Illinois*
 - Matt Bettenhausen**, *Deputy Governor for Criminal Justice and Public Safety*
 - Andrea Zopp**, *Attorney formerly serving as a first assistant in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office and as Assistant U.S. Attorney*
 - Kathryn Dobrinic**, *Montgomery County State's Attorney*
- MAY 4, 2000** - Governor Ryan officially files an Executive Order creating the special commission on the death penalty. The order calls for members of the commission, following their review, to file a report detailing the commission's findings and providing comprehensive advice and recommendations to the Governor that will ensure the administration of capital punishment in Illinois will be fair and accurate.