

Judges deny lethal injection challenge

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Supreme Court's refusal Monday to consider a second lethal injection case suggests the justices are not ready to decide whether the drugs amount to cruel and unusual punishment, legal experts said.

The denial was issued without comment, leaving court watchers to speculate over justices' reasons for rejecting an appeal by a Tennessee death-row inmate who claims lethal injection is

unconstitutional.

"The Supreme Court is plainly not ready to step into the lethal injection controversy yet," said Eric M. Freedman, a Hofstra University law professor.

"It's kind of a puzzle," said Kent Scheidegger, legal director of the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation, a victims' rights group in Sacramento.

Used by the federal government and all states but Nebraska, lethal injection has

become a major issue in death penalty cases because of a 2005 study in the Lancet medical journal. The study indicated that a painkiller administered at the start of an execution can wear off before other drugs kick in and the prisoner dies.

In California earlier this year, an execution was postponed when no doctor or nurse would agree to administer a fatal dose of a barbiturate. A judge there is reviewing the issue.

And in Ohio earlier this month, medical technicians struggled for a half-hour before finding a viable vein in Joseph Clark's arm for an IV to deliver the lethal injection drugs.

The Supreme Court already is considering one lethal injection case brought by Clarence Hill, a Florida inmate on death row for killing a police officer in Pensacola 24 years ago.

In Hill's case, justices are considering only whether

prisoners can file last-minute civil rights challenges claiming their deaths by lethal injection would be cruel, not the broader constitutional issues raised by Abu-Ali Abdur'Rahman. He is on Tennessee's death row for the 1986 killing of a Nashville drug dealer.

A group of Tennessee doctors had told justices that the three-drug combination used in that state and most others "makes it inevitable that, over time, some inmates will suffer excruciating and unnecessary torturous pain." They also said the state lacks properly trained medical officials to monitor prisoners during executions.

Death penalty supporters argue the Constitution does not guarantee convicted killers a pain-free execution.

Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, said justices may have denied Abdur'Rahman's appeal because they want to wait until judges in several states have conducted lengthy hearings on the drug combinations that are used.

Freedman said the jus-

tics' rejection of the case "suggests the Supreme Court is proceeding in its normal and appropriately cautious manner."

Others weren't surprised. "I really didn't think this particular case was going to bring down the entire death penalty jurisprudence of the last 25 years," said Bryan Liang, a professor of health law studies at California Western School of Law in San Diego.

Scheidegger said he's not sure what to think, given the performance of several justices at last month's arguments in Hill's case.

During the lively argument, justices clashed with each other, asked numerous questions about how states carry out capital punishment and discussed whether the burden should be on inmates to suggest alternatives to lethal injection.

Then again, Scheidegger said, it wouldn't be the first time a Supreme Court argument was misleading and justices reached a completely different result than what they suggested with their questions and comments.

Woman overcomes dyslexia to learn

By Kenny Waters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

PHILADELPHIA (NNPA) - For years, Tracy Johnson from Philadelphia could not fathom why she had a difficult time learning basic math and English and was doing so poorly in special education classes.

She found out years later: She was suffering from dyslexia.

Growing up and being labeled as stupid by her peers and being diagnosed with a learning disability — a stigma that stuck with her up to her first attempt at a community college — Johnson can now smile and shrug off the negative things that were said about her.

Johnson just graduated with an associate's degree in liberal arts at Harcum Col-

lege in Bryn Mawr, Pa. with a 4.0 grade point average and a load of honors and awards.

"My life has been challenging, but successful," she said.

"The obstacles [have] made me who I am today. Without the negative, there is no positive."

It takes a lot to grasp an understanding of what Johnson had to endure up

until her mid-20s when she officially found out she had dyslexia.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes, dyslexia is a brain-based type of learning disability that specifically impairs a person's ability to read.

Those with dyslexia usually read at a pace that is significantly slower despite having normal intelligence.

While in elementary and high school — because she

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JUGS

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School District Board of Education.

In 1978, Watson was elected to the California State Senate, where she was chosen to chair the Senate Health and Human Services Committee from 1981 to 1998. Her career continued to escalate in 1999 when President Clinton appointed her to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia. Congresswoman Watson currently serves as Democratic regional whip for Southern California and continues to serve on various committees working toward equal rights for underserved populations.

During the luncheon, an awards ceremony will also be held, and a \$3,000 scholarship will be given to Cheyenne High School senior Charmaine Hank. Carroll said JUGS gives awards to students who are struggling [financially] to get through.

"We plan to give [scholarships each year]," she

added.

Other local women who have served in professional positions or as an elected official or other community service areas will be honored. Among them are Jacquelyn Shropshire, president of the Las Vegas Clark County Urban League; Clark County Commissioner Lynette Boggs-McDonald; Brenda Dizon, executive director of Shade Tree, a local shelter for abused women and their children; and Billie Rayford, assistant regional superintendent with the Clark County School District.

Proceeds from JUGS' local fundraisers will also benefit the Davies, a Las Vegas family with economic and other challenges, a Katrina family and the Sister to Sister Program, as well as other charitable groups.

"They had nothing and we helped them get furniture, food, money and housing," Carroll said as she explained how JUGS assisted the family that was forced to relocate

to Nevada following the Gulf region disaster last year.

JUGS chose to support the Davies family of nine siblings who were abandoned by their parents yet have remained intact with the leadership of the older siblings and help from community sources. Another beneficiary of JUGS support is Sister to Sister, a program mentoring young women, Carroll explained.

"We are in the process of establishing our own mentoring program," she said.

In addition to the community awards luncheon, breakfast events, a Sister to Sister luncheon and two business meetings will take place during the convention.

Last year about 150 people attended the conference that was held in Baltimore, Md. This year organizers anticipate over 200 participants.

For more information, tickets and sponsorship support, call (702) 869-8697.

Jefferson

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committed if that were the case. But I will not plead guilty to something I did not do, no matter how things are made to look and no matter the risk," Jefferson said at the time.

In addition to the federal investigation, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct has launched its own investigation of Jefferson's bribery allegations. The affidavit also quotes conversations between

Jefferson and Mody about how Jefferson had placed iGate stock in his children's names.

"I make a deal for my children; it wouldn't be me," he allegedly told Mody after passing cryptic notes about the shares.

The affidavit said Jefferson allegedly joked with Mody about the notes.

He was quoted: "All these damn notes we're writing to each other as if we're talking, as if the FBI is watching."

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