

**For Immediate Release:** November 18, 2014

**Contact:** Laura Burstein, [Laura.Burstein@Squirepb.com](mailto:Laura.Burstein@Squirepb.com)

For More Information: [www.texasdefender.org/scott-panetti](http://www.texasdefender.org/scott-panetti)

## **Worldwide Support Grows for Clemency for Scott Panetti, A Paranoid Schizophrenic Scheduled for Execution on December 3rd**

### **Execution That Would “Cross a Moral Line” Opposed by Mental Health Organizations, Texas and National Legislators, Evangelical Christians, the European Union and Thousands More in Supplement to Clemency Petition Filed Today**

*(Austin, Texas, November 18, 2014)* Worldwide support for Scott Panetti reached a groundswell today with new calls for clemency from prominent individuals and organizations from across Texas and the world, including the nation’s largest grassroots advocacy organization on mental illness, **National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)**; **NAMI’s Texas affiliate**; **ten legislators from Texas**; former **U.S. Representative Ron Paul**; several more **Evangelical Christians**; and the **European Union**, which represents twenty-eight nations.

Mr. Panetti, a man who has suffered from schizophrenia for over thirty years, is scheduled to be executed by the State of Texas on December 3, 2014, unless the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles recommends commutation to life in prison and Governor Rick Perry grants it, or a court stays the execution that attorneys and supporters have said would “cross a moral line.”

“We believe that executing a person as severely and persistently ill as Scott Panetti would only compound the original tragedy, represent a profound injustice, and serve no useful retributive or preventive purpose,” states the letter from NAMI and NAMI Texas. “After many years of review and debate about this case, we urge you exercise your authority to commute the death penalty to life in prison in this highly tragic case.”

The letter from NAMI and NAMI Texas can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxR5nee8pBYQOHE1YXNIWE1kbHd3ZTZzdjZTZTRiNWFCd1U0/view?usp=sharing>

Letters from the diverse and unlikely array of supporters were submitted as part of a supplement to the clemency petition filed today with the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles and Governor Perry. The amended petition builds on the already widespread and extensive support for clemency for Mr. Panetti by the **American Psychiatric Association**, **Mental Health America** and **Disability Rights Texas** and 24 other **mental health experts**; **33 former prosecutors and U.S. Attorneys General**, **55 Evangelical leaders** from Texas and nationally and 7 retired and active **Bishops from the United Methodist Church** and other faith leaders; **Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation** and the **American Bar Association**, among others, who had submitted their letters as part of the initial clemency petition filed on November 12, 2014.

The supplement to the clemency petition can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxR5nee8pBYQbjZHWkh5dHp1MVE/view?usp=sharing>

Texas legislators are particularly concerned about the fact that Mr. Panetti has not had a competency hearing in nearly seven years. He has a fixed delusion that his execution is being orchestrated by Satan, working through the State of Texas, to put an end to his preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“As members of the Texas Legislature, we are writing to express our grave concern that Scott Panetti is scheduled for execution on December 3, 2014, without any meaningful evaluation of his current mental condition,” the letter signed by eight Texas legislators reads. “Texas has a strong interest in a fair and accurate criminal justice system, and its administration of capital punishment must comport with due process of law.”

The letter from Texas legislators can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxR5nee8pBYQcmNuR3MtMkh0THIVZEc3UnhhbzJoOXpIV EZv/view?usp=sharing>

On November 14, 2014, Mr. Panetti’s attorneys filed a new Motion in the 216<sup>th</sup> District Court in Kerrville, Texas, which seeks to stay or modify Mr. Panetti's scheduled execution date in order to assess Mr. Panetti's competency to be executed.

The Motion provides details on how Mr. Panetti believes he is “hearing voices” and has a “listening device implanted in his tooth.” He said he was being executed “because TDCJ wants him to ‘shut up’ about the corruption and to stop him from preaching the Gospel.”

Link to Motion here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1LFfr8Iqz\\_7NTFwUWJSYXNablZDcnBvdzFTQUhGTWxfczJR/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1LFfr8Iqz_7NTFwUWJSYXNablZDcnBvdzFTQUhGTWxfczJR/view?usp=sharing)

The first time Mr. Panetti showed signs of being afflicted with a psychotic disorder was in 1978, over 14 years before he shaved his head and killed his in-laws, Amanda and Joseph Alvarado. During his multiple hospitalizations, doctors diagnosed him with chronic schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder.

In 1986, Mr. Panetti first succumbed to the delusion that he was engaged in spiritual warfare with Satan. In an affidavit his first wife signed to have him involuntarily committed, she testified that he was obsessed with the idea that the devil was in the house. He engaged in a series of bizarre behaviors to exorcize his home, including burying his furniture in the backyard because he thought the devil was in the furniture.

Detailed information about Mr. Panetti’s history of severe mental illness can be found in timeline starting in 1978 that shows how Mr. Panetti’s mental health degenerated over the years, including how in 1986, the Social Security Administration made a determination that Mr. Panetti was so disabled from schizophrenia that he was entitled to government benefits:

<http://texasdefender.org/wp-content/uploads/Panetti-Mental-Illness-Timeline.htm>

As the letter from the EU notes, “The European Union strongly believes that the execution of persons suffering from a mental disorder is contrary to widely accepted human rights norms and

is in contradiction to the minimum standards of human rights set forth in several international human rights instruments, as well as being prohibited by the U.S. Constitution.”

The letter from the European Union can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxR5nee8pBYQMTJ6NTRsMExTS1FieUtnSXFvZ0g0VkhJdXVB/view?usp=sharing>

As former Texas Governor Mark White said in his new statement, “I know very well that in so many instances, there are incredibly close and difficult calls that have to be made to either allow or prohibit the death penalty from being carried out. But Scott Panetti’s plea for clemency is no such case. He is a severely mentally ill man. His trial was a sham. And executing Panetti would say far more about us than it would about the man we are attempting to kill.”

Governor White’s letter can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxR5nee8pBYQWlp5MDNEaktKM3E5SFhEWExvNTZNa3VwZXVR/view?usp=sharing>

Former Congressman Ron Paul agrees: “The circumstances of this case present a situation where execution does not serve the state of Texas.”

Rep. Paul’s letter can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxR5nee8pBYQRWtuVTBhRzdRQXhFVFA5d1Brc0xHak9ITUww/view?usp=sharing>

A complete listing of the clemency letters and more information about Mr. Panetti’s case, including legal documents, [video footage](#), and more, can be accessed here: [www.texasdefender.org/scott-panetti](http://www.texasdefender.org/scott-panetti)

Additionally, an online petition has over 6,500 signatures in support of clemency from citizens of Texas, the U.S. and the world.

The Change.org petition can be accessed here: <https://www.change.org/p/gov-rick-perry-spare-my-brother-s-life-a-severely-mentally-ill-man-on-death-row>

To speak with attorneys for Mr. Panetti, Kathryn Kase of the Texas Defender Service and Greg Wiercioch of the Texas Defender Service and the University of Wisconsin Law School, or signatories to the letters supporting clemency, please contact: Laura Burstein, [Laura.Burstein@Squirepb.com](mailto:Laura.Burstein@Squirepb.com), [202-626-6868](tel:202-626-6868) (o); [202-669-3411](tel:202-669-3411) (c).

###