February 8, 2022

Governor Gavin Newsom

1303 10th Street, Suite 1173

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Douglas R. Stankewitz, an Innocent Man on California’s Death Row for 44 years and counting

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing to ask you to take action regarding Douglas R. Stankewitz, **an innocent Native American man who has been wrongfully incarcerated for over 43 years on Death Row in California**. His is a story of how one man’s life can be taken by overzealous prosecutors and law enforcement for a crime that he did not commit. The injustice against him has been perpetuated by the legal system, including by lawyers who did not pursue his innocence claim for over 39 years. Injustice is still being perpetuated by the superior court which grants every request and motion made by the district attorney; and either ignores defense requests/motions or denies them out of hand. To date, public officials have failed to take action to assist him. The district attorney dropped the death penalty in 2019, but he is still serving LWOP (life without parole).

The defense, which viewed the evidence and prosecution reports in depth for the first time in 2017, found *no physical evidence which ties him to the murder*. The State’s primary witness at his trials who testified falsely that he saw the shooting recanted his testimony in 1993.

**During these 44 years, Mr. Stankewitz has never had an evidentiary hearing to consider the validity of the existing evidence or the veracity of the testimony against him.** An evidentiary hearing would expose the abuse of the system and should be granted.

Examples of the known prosecutorial misconduct that has occurred:

* The murder weapon was planted – as proved by law enforcement reports
* Over 50 pieces of evidence ‘missing’, including many that are likely exculpatory and/or exonerating
* Improper evidence storage by the County, which made DNA testing inconclusive
* Current California D.A.’s office perpetuating falsehoods regarding key evidence, including the height of the victim
* False testimony at trial by law enforcement **and** the state’s primary witness who recanted in 1993
* A pattern and practice of preparing false reports and filing them with the court

California has incurred huge taxpayer expense, likely in the millions of dollars, for: his incarceration on death row from 1978 – Present, 2 trials, state and federal appeals and habeas writs, and ongoing superior and appellate court proceedings from 2012 – Present.

This outrageous injustice must be stopped. **Please take whatever action is in your power**, including intervening in the case, commuting his sentence to time served.

More information and all evidence of Mr. Stankewitz’s innocence can be found at justiceforchief.org

In Freedom,

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Your Name

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Your Address