

1455 Vincenti Place  
Santa Barbara, CA 93108  
Tele. 805-969-3732  
Fax 805-456-4351  
Email stan@rodenmediations.com  
Website: rodenmediations.com

## Stanley M. Roden | Mediator-Arbitrator

March 2, 2007

The Honorable Gloria Romero  
Senate Majority Leader  
Chair, Public Safety Committee  
State Capitol, Room 313  
Sacramento, CA 95814

VIA FACSIMILE: (916) 445-0485

**RE: SUPPORT FOR SB 999**

Dear Senator Romero:

I am writing because I support, and urge you to support, SB 999 (the Juvenile Life Without Parole Reform Act). As a former district attorney and former Chairman of California's Commission on Violence & Crime Control (Vasconcellos--1979-1981), I champion laws that are tough on crime. Nonetheless, our laws must also make sense. Our current law allows a sixteen year old offender to be incarcerated until death, with no opportunity for parole, and that simply defies logic.

First, science has demonstrated that children have a unique capacity for rehabilitation because their minds are not fully developed. Further, in the U.S. approximately 59% of kids serving life sentences are first-time offenders. In *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005), the Supreme Court recognized that these considerations severely undermine any argument that a juvenile's character can be deemed "irretrievably depraved." The current law fails to recognize these realities. Second, we are out of step with the rest of world with this practice. The U.S. accounts for 99.5% of all juveniles serving life sentences without parole world-wide and California accounts for nearly 10% of those juveniles in the U.S. We must acknowledge and respect international consensus on the treatment of juveniles. Finally, these children are languishing in prison for their entire lives, in most cases longer than the average adult offender. Therefore, the sentence of life without parole is more punitive to juveniles than adults and also potentially compounds an already critical overcrowding problem in our prisons.

SB 999 is a sensible, narrowly tailored reform of our current law. It provides a juvenile offender convicted at age 16 the opportunity to request a parole hearing after serving a minimum 25 year sentence, at the earliest at age 41. This reform recognizes that severe punishment is necessary for heinous crimes, but it gives this uniquely-positioned segment of the population some motivation to rehabilitate.

SB 999 will keep criminals off the streets while recognizing that long-term rehabilitation for juveniles is possible. I urge you to support this thoughtful and rational legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Roden", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Stanley M. Roden