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News Flash



Virginia Catholic Conference Commends Governor's Delay of Execution

Less than two hours before Percy Levar Walton's scheduled execution, Governor Timothy Kaine delayed the execution for six months. The Governor stated that it would be "imprudent to either proceed with the execution or grant clemency without further review," given lingering doubts about Mr. Walton's understanding of the punishment he was about to receive.

In a June 7th letter, the Virginia bishops called on the Governor to commute Mr. Walton's sentence to life in prison without parole. Although the letter focused primarily on the compelling need to avoid using the death penalty whenever non-lethal means are adequate to protect society, the bishops also noted that evidence of Walton's possible mental retardation or illness raised additional ethical concerns. "Surely, whenever doubts exist about an individual's ability to understand what his punishment is or why he is receiving it, those doubts should always be resolved in favor of preserving life rather than ending it," they wrote.

Reflecting on the Governor's decision, Virginia Catholic Conference Director Jeff Caruso expressed "gratitude for the concern and prudence the Governor has shown, and hope that further review of Mr. Walton's case will ultimately enable his life to be spared."

The Virginia Catholic Conference is the public-policy representative of the Catholic bishops serving the Arlington and Richmond dioceses.

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