

AAMR Applauds U.S. Supreme Court Decision to Ban Execution of Persons with Mental Retardation

Washington, DC (June 20, 2002) – In a 6-3 vote today, the U.S. Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional and cruel to execute persons with mental retardation. The American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) fully supports this decision. AAMR has tirelessly advocated against executing people with mental retardation on the grounds that it is morally and ethically wrong, and that it is “cruel and unusual punishment” under the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The Supreme Court decision comes in the wake of the Daryl Renard Atkins case, an individual who has an IQ of 59 and has never lived on his own or held a job.

James W. Ellis, Attorney for Atkins and Past President of AAMR says, “The Court has recognized the consensus among the American people, even those who support the death penalty. They are deeply disturbed by the prospect that people with mental retardation could face execution.” Ellis has led the Association’s efforts in advocating for full protections and rights of persons with mental retardation facing the death penalty.

AAMR has long served as *amicus curiae* in Supreme Court cases and has published a position paper on mental retardation and the death penalty http://www.aamr.org/Policies/position_statements.shtml. In 2001, AAMR and eight other disability organizations presented an *amicus* brief to the U.S. Supreme Court advocating against the death penalty in the Atkins case.

“I am deeply grateful that the Supreme Court Justices have put an end to this barbaric practice of killing persons who do not have the full intellectual capacity to understand the crime they committed,” says Doreen Croser, Executive Director of AAMR. “This is an important day for disability advocates and for our country.”

Headquartered in Washington, DC, AAMR is a 126-year old professional organization that promotes progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal rights for people with intellectual disabilities.

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