

MEDIA MENTION

Paul Khoury Recalls Death Row Representation After Virginia Legislators Vote to End Capital Punishment

Richmond Times-Dispatch

February 26, 2021

Paul F. Khoury, co-chair of Wiley's Government Contracts Practice, was quoted in a February 23 *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article on the recent approval by state legislators to end capital punishment in Virginia. The proposed legislation heads to Gov. Ralph Northam, who has stated he intends to sign it into law, the publication reported.

Discussing a long history of death penalty cases in Virginia, the *Times-Dispatch* asked Mr. Khoury to recall the case of Joseph Patrick Payne, an inmate who had been sentenced to die for the murder of another inmate at the Powhatan Correctional Center, northwest of Richmond, VA. Mr. Khoury took on Mr. Payne's case pro bono as a first-year associate, after Mr. Payne had been sentenced to death, and Mr. Khoury and Wiley would spend nine years representing Mr. Payne in his state and federal habeas corpus challenges. When those avenues were exhausted, Mr. Payne was scheduled to be executed on November 3, 1996. But just three hours before the scheduled execution, while Mr. Khoury was with Mr. Payne in the "death house" at Greensville Correctional Center, Gov. George Allen commuted Mr. Payne's sentence to life based on significant questions about the reliability of the evidence.

"It was surreal," Mr. Khoury said. He recalled speaking into the cameras outside the prison, "I can't even imagine anything that I've ever done or maybe ever will do that involves more tension than not knowing whether your client is going to live or die."

Related Professionals

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