

2004 SESSION

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SENATE BILL NO. 234

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 13, 2004

A BILL for the relief of Julius Earl Ruffin.

Patrons—Lambert; Delegate: Spruill

Referred to Committee on Finance

Whereas, Julius Earl Ruffin (Ruffin) is a resident of Suffolk, Virginia; and
Whereas, in 1982, Ruffin was employed by the Eastern Virginia Medical School as a maintenance worker; and
Whereas, in January 1982, the victim of a brutal rape identified Ruffin as her attacker after she saw him while riding in an elevator at the school; and
Whereas, on January 20, 1982, Ruffin was arrested by the Norfolk Police Department and charged with rape, statutory burglary and three counts of sodomy; and
Whereas, Ruffin was immediately incarcerated on January 20, 1982, pending trial on the charges; and
Whereas, the arrest and the charges were based on the victim's identification of Ruffin and blood tests that linked semen found at the crime scene with a gene pool including eight percent of all African-American men; and
Whereas, Ruffin's first trial on the charges occurred on May 3 and 4, 1982, and ended with a hung jury; and
Whereas, a second trial occurred on July 8 and 9, 1982, also ending with a hung jury; and
Whereas, in the case of the first and second trial, there was indication that the juries had serious questions about the description that the victim gave at the scene in contrast with Ruffin's physical appearance and gave weight to Ruffin's corroborated testimony that he was in Suffolk with his brother and two other friends on the night of the attack; and
Whereas, a third trial was held on September 30, 1982, and on October 1, 1982; and Ruffin was convicted of rape, statutory burglary and three counts of forcible sodomy; and
Whereas, on December 19, 1982, Ruffin was sentenced to five life terms in the Virginia State Penitentiary; and
Whereas, Ruffin maintained his innocence and proceeded to pursue all allowable appeals in the state and federal system, all of which were denied; and
Whereas, though ultimately eligible for parole, Ruffin continued to assert his innocence, which adversely affected the outcome of each hearing, denying him the opportunity for parole; and
Whereas, over the course of his incarceration, Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing became a forensically accepted and more definitive method for identifying individuals accused of committing crimes; and
Whereas, Ruffin sought to have the forensic evidence in his case reanalyzed using the more sophisticated DNA testing as a means of proving his innocence; and
Whereas, Ruffin was initially informed by the Virginia Division of Forensic Science (Division) that they were unable to comply with his request because it was standard operating procedure to send all forensic evidence back to the agency providing it after all the appeals of the person convicted were exhausted; and
Whereas, Ruffin continued to pursue the evidence by making a formal request with the Commonwealth Attorney's office of the City of Norfolk to search for remaining evidence for the DNA testing; and
Whereas, a search by state scientists at the Division yielded a small portion of biological evidence that was suitable for the testing; and
Whereas, on December 31, 2002, the Circuit Court of the City of Norfolk ordered the Division to perform appropriate DNA testing on the biological evidence; and
Whereas, pursuant to that order, the Division completed that testing and on February 11, 2003, issued a Certificate of Analysis excluding Ruffin as a possible contributor of the DNA found in the samples collected from the crime scene; and
Whereas, the Certificate of Analysis further stated that the DNA did match that of an individual who was already incarcerated; and
Whereas, on February 12, 2003, the Commonwealth's Attorney for the City of Norfolk arranged to have Ruffin released on parole; and
Whereas, on February 19, 2003, the Commonwealth's Attorney of the City of Norfolk and Ruffin

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59 through legal counsel made a written request to Governor Mark Warner for executive clemency; and

60 Whereas, on March 19, 2003, Governor Warner granted Ruffin an Absolute Pardon; and

61 Whereas, Ruffin, from the time of his incarceration in 1982 to his release in 2003, was incarcerated
62 for more than 21 years in the Virginia prison system; and

63 Whereas, Ruffin lost income and the ability to pursue a career as an electrician as a result of his
64 incarceration; and

65 Whereas, Ruffin has also suffered severe physical, emotional and psychological damage as a result of
66 this incarceration and has no other means to obtain adequate relief except by action of this body; now,
67 therefore,

68 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

69 **1. § 1.** *That the following shall be paid for the relief of Julius Earl Ruffin from the general fund of the*
70 *state treasury, upon execution of a release of all claims he may have against the Commonwealth or any*
71 *agency, instrumentality, officer, employee, or political subdivision in connection with the aforesaid*
72 *occurrence, (i) the sum of \$1 million to be paid to Julius Earl Ruffin on or before August 1, 2004, by*
73 *check issued by the State Treasurer on warrant of the Comptroller and (ii) an annuity for the primary*
74 *benefit of Julius Earl Ruffin providing for equal monthly payments, for a period certain of 30 years*
75 *commencing on or before September 1, 2004, in the cumulative amount of \$2 million. The State*
76 *Treasurer shall purchase the annuity at the lowest cost available from any A+ rated company, including*
77 *any A+ rated company from which the State Lottery Department may purchase an annuity, and such*
78 *annuity shall contain beneficiary provisions providing for the annuity's continued disbursement in the*
79 *event of the death of Julius Earl Ruffin.*