

Former Gov Milliken urges Lansing to ban juvenile lifer laws
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By William Milliken

*Former Michigan Gov. William Milliken, a Republican from Traverse City, has been a forceful critic of mandatory life sentences for juvenile offenders. He filed a friend of the court brief opposing such sentences with the U.S. Supreme Court, and has recruited retired judges and prosecutors to join him in pressuring the state to soften its stance toward young offenders. What follows is Milliken's "statement of principles" explaining why he agrees with the U.S. Supreme Court's rationale for why juvenile offenders should be treated differently from adults who commit violent crimes. **Milliken, 94, wrote this statement before county prosecutors in Michigan indicated they would oppose sentence reductions for most of the juvenile lifers now behind bars.***

MILLIKEN STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

WE joined the 2014 Milliken amicus brief advocating that the Michigan Supreme Court apply *Miller v Alabama* retroactively to the 360+ people serving the unconstitutional sentence of mandatory juvenile life without parole.

WE KNOW THAT scientific research on adolescent brain development proves that youth do not possess the fully developed brains that adults do. The science has led the U.S. Supreme Court to establish the principle that youth should not be held to the same standard of criminal culpability as adults.

WE KNOW THAT the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Montgomery v Louisiana* that those people currently serving mandatory life without the possibility of parole for crimes committed as teens were serving constitutionally impermissible sentences. The *Montgomery* ruling applied the 2012 *Miller v Alabama* ruling retroactively to people already serving these automatic life sentences.

WE KNOW THAT Michigan is second only to Pennsylvania in the number of people serving life without any possibility for parole for crimes committed as teens.

WE KNOW THAT, in *Montgomery*, the Court said that a life without parole sentence is always unconstitutionally cruel and unusual punishment for a juvenile offender unless the youth is found to be "irreparably corrupt" and "permanently incorrigible." *Montgomery* provides guidance to lower courts that life sentences for youthful defendants are impermissible except for the "rare juvenile offender who exhibits such irretrievable depravity that rehabilitation is impossible."

WE KNOW THAT, since the 2012 *Miller* ruling, Michigan has ignored the Court's guidance as to the "rare" youth and applied a life without parole sentence to 50 percent of youth eligible for that sentence.

WE KNOW THAT the American Probation and Parole Association, American Correctional Association, National Association of Counties, National PTA, American Bar Association, American Psychological Association, Boys Scouts of America, Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, General Synod of the United Church in Christ, Jesuit Conference, Muslim Public Affairs Council, Union for Reform Judaism, United Methodist Church General Board

of Church and Society, Mental Health America and dozens of other organizations have called for the abolishment of juvenile life without parole.

WE URGE the Michigan Legislature and Governor Rick Snyder to ban life without any possibility of parole for youth.