

DNA links can haunt inmates at parole

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- At least 12 U.S. states would consider DNA evidence from crimes an inmate wasn't charged with to deny or delay parole, USA Today reported Friday. Those states were among 44 that responded to a survey by the newspaper. The practice appears to be more common as DNA databases expand. In Texas, Debbie Shaw, victim of a 1986 rape, said that sending evidence in her case to the parole board about a man in prison for burglary gave her "some sense of justice." Johnny Ray Patton was denied parole in 2007. "Now I know I don't have to worry about him being out," Shaw told the newspaper. Defense lawyers say that presenting DNA evidence at parole hearings could be unfair because inmates don't have the same rights they do at trial, including the right to a lawyer. Norman Gahn, an assistant prosecutor in Milwaukee, said that penalizing inmates can bring some justice in cases where the statute of limitations has expired. "With the power of the databases, we can make them pay at least some price for their actions if -- surprise, surprise -- they're already in prison," he told USA Today.

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