

No appeal for 32-year death row inmate

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Condemned killer William Lee Thompson has been on death row in Florida for 32 years but the U.S. Supreme Court has decided not to take up his latest appeal.

This week's denial by the court has touched off a heated written debate among three justices over such issues as how long is too long to stay on death row, who is responsible and when does the long delayed sentence become cruel and unusual punishment, The Christian Science Monitor reported Thursday.

Included was a harsh critique of capital punishment in the United States by Justice John Paul Stevens, the Monitor said. Justices Stephen Breyer and Clarence Thomas also submitted comments.

Stevens says that executions postponed for 20 or 30 years undercut the stated public purposes of having capital punishment -- retribution and deterrence.

"Today, condemned inmates await execution for an average of nearly 13 years," Stevens said. "This figure underscores the fundamental inhumanity and unworkability of the death penalty as it is administered in the United States."

Thomas responded that the 32-year delay in Thompson's execution is the result of legal efforts by Thompson to overturn his death sentence in what he called "a mockery of our system of justice," the Monitor said.

Breyer is said to conclude that flawed trial procedures are responsible for delays in the Thompson case, not Thompson himself.

Thompson was convicted of the beating, sexual abuse and torture that resulted in the death of a woman in a Miami hotel room in 1976.

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