



Arthur, group try to stop Ala. execution

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) -- A New York group has launched an e-mail campaign trying to halt the execution of Alabama death row inmate Tommy Arthur, who is set to die July 31 for a 1982 contract killing.

The Innocence Project hopes to convince Gov. Bob Riley to issue a stay and order DNA testing that could exonerate Arthur, who claims he is innocent and was wrongly convicted of murdering Troy Wicker, 35, of Muscle Shoals. An aide said Riley did not plan to intervene.



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"The evidence is overwhelming that Thomas Arthur is guilty, and barring court action, the state plans to move forward with his scheduled execution," said Tara Hutchison, Riley's press secretary.

Arthur separately filed an appeal last week asking a court to delay his execution so he can challenge the state's new lethal injection process, which was adopted last fall but has yet to be used.

Arthur contends the state's plan to administer a dose of sodium pentothal to render him unconscious and then a second dose if the first one doesn't work amounts to an "entirely new" execution procedure that needs court review.

Arthur's daughter, Sherrie Stone, on Monday expressed little confidence that the challenge before the 11th U.S. Court of Appeals would delay the execution.

Stone was instead focused on the campaign to pressure Riley. "He's always claimed his innocence," Stone said of her father. "The DNA tests would resolve the whole issue." The victim's wife initially told police that an intruder killed her husband and raped her.

She later changed her story, saying that she had a sexual relationship with Arthur and paid him \$10,000 for the slaying. Arthur's attorneys want DNA testing of evidence collected from the wife.

Arthur contends a DNA test of physical evidence could help show someone else killed Wicker. Prosecutors say Arthur received a fair trial, and federal courts ruled that DNA testing would be of little value.