



U.S. Department of Justice

Criminal Division

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Washington, DC 20530-0001

October 22, 2003

Ms. Sheila A. Pecor
452 Morton Street
West Springfield, MA 01089

Dear Ms. Pecor:

This is in response to your letter to the President concerning the assault that took the life of your son, Kevin J. Pecor. Although the President would like to respond personally to all citizen correspondence he receives, his extensive official duties preclude him doing so. Therefore, your letter has been referred to me for response.

Let me begin, Ms. Pecor, by expressing our deepest sympathy for the loss of your son. While no one can fully enter into another's sorrow, we can appreciate the anguish you must be suffering.

As to the sentencing of the individuals charged with this crime, it should be noted that the penalties for committing crimes are established by the legislative, not the executive branch of government. Neither the President nor the Congress of the United States can decide how a person convicted of a state crime will be punished, since each state legislature has the right to decide what penalty may be imposed on persons who violate that state's criminal statutes.

We regret that Kevin was the victim of vehicular manslaughter and sincerely hope that you will recover completely from this ordeal. You may also find it helpful to contact some of the local support groups which are actively involved in campaigning for the rights of victims of violent crimes, including families and friends who have lost loved ones under such tragic circumstances. Your local police may be able to put you in touch with such groups, or the public library in your community might have a listing of interest to you.

On behalf of the President and the Department of Justice, please accept our condolences on the death of your son. Please understand that even though we are not unsympathetic to your situation, the Department of Justice can assume jurisdiction only when there has been a possible violation of a federal offence. Your letter refers to a State case, and neither the President nor the Department has jurisdiction over State cases prosecuted by State and local authorities.

The President appreciates the confidence which prompted you to write him.

Sincerely,

Correspondence Management Staff
Office of Administration