

Editorials

A rush to the needle: A decision overturned

In our opinion

10-25-2007

Daniel Lee Siebert. What a horrible human being.

He is a killer of young women and children. May he go straight to meet his Maker.

He should go there, however, on his own, without our help.

Thankfully, a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta may have just seen to that.

Late Wednesday, the court overturned a decision by U.S. District Judge Mark Fuller and stayed Siebert's scheduled Thursday-night execution, pending a lethal-injection challenge from Kentucky being heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

This surely is a disappointment to Gov. Bob Riley, who had declined to delay the execution and seemed determined to make sure Siebert didn't escape Alabama's death chamber. You see, Siebert doesn't have long to live; in a manner of months, he'll likely be dead from pancreatic cancer.

If that were the only issue, however, Siebert's case might pass without much notice.

It is not so much his state of health that is in question, but the constitutionality of this almost-execution.

At this moment, the U.S. Supreme Court is weighing the constitutionality of state-conducted executions by lethal injection. At the very least, Riley should have been willing to wait until the high court issues its decision. To do anything else simply shows extraordinarily poor judgment.

In essence, that is what the 11th Circuit Court said Wednesday.

It's obvious that politics are involved here. Our take-no-prisoners attorney general, Troy King, catches loads of attention with addle-headed speeches advocating the abolition of parole, for example.



The governor, too, wishes no one to think he's soft on crime, though there is no chance of that. Alabama knows where the governor stands on crime. He's tough, that's clear. Who isn't?

What Riley needed to show us, however, was where he stands on common sense and the Constitution.

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