

December 5, 2016

Craig Cesal #52948-019

Office of the President  
of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

FCI Terre Haute  
P.O. Box 33  
Terre Haute, IN 47808

RE: Executive Clemency Denial

Dear President Obama,

I am a federal prisoner, who is a first-time felon, convicted of conspiring to distribute marijuana. In 2003, I was sentenced to life imprisonment, which was recently reduced to thirty years in prison. As I am a 57 year old diabetic, this is still a de facto life sentence, as it exceeds my likely life expectancy.

My Chicago area business repaired long haul trucks which had been damaged hauling marijuana and other contraband. Marijuana from Mexico was often smuggled within the structure of the semi. I did not believe my conduct was criminal, I did it for twenty-three years, and I always admitted my conduct. The government stated I encouraged, or I succinctly told long haul truckers to traffic marijuana. I pleaded guilty. Under the Sentencing Guidelines as they were applied in 2003, I was sentenced to life imprisonment. The drivers were sentenced to between five and seven years in prison.

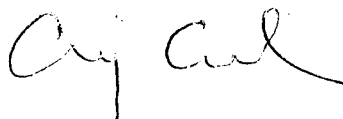
I qualified under the strictures of the Clemency Project 2014, and they filed a petition seeking a sentence commutation for me. I obtained lists of each time a group of prisoners enjoyed a grant of commutation of sentence, and I researched the case history of each commuttee. I looked for a common theme. I noted each offender, except very few, had one or more prior convictions which resulted in mandatory minimum sentence enhancements, three-strike law life sentence enhancements, or career offender guideline enhancements. This resulted in sentences, such as life for a drug offense, which were disproportionately higher than warranted for the offense. Very very few first time offenders received relief. My petition was denied.

I adamantly assert a life sentence for a first-time offender is also disproportionate to a drug crime. The defect, I believe, in the processing of a clemency petition, is that whether the president is recommended to grant or deny the petition is determined by the Justice Department, through the Pardon Attorney. I say the DOJ can easily recommend remedy of a disproportionate sentence which is based on overly harsh laws, but they are loathe to recommend a commutation based on the actions of an overly zealous prosecutor, or an overly zealous judge. Understandingly, the DOJ would not want to offend these coworkers.

I ask the White House staff to review my facts and review my clemency petition on its own merits, without the pressures of the Department of Justice. I seek consideration for clemency without regard to a relationship to a local U.S. Attorney, or to a U.S. District Court Judge. I have no prior convictions, save a \$150 fine paid for a trespassing ticket in 1981. I always admitted my conduct, and always accepted responsibility, and I still do. I belong to no group or gang, and no violence was associated with my case. My conviction for conspiring to distribute marijuana does not warrant a life sentence.

Please reconsider my clemency petition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Craig Cesal".

Craig Cesal

Lifer.