

Wilson County man unjustly in prison 31 years gets hearing



[Andy Humbles](#), ahumbles@tennessean.com 4:37 p.m. CDT July 19, 2016



(Photo: File)

A Wilson County man who for years has sought a formal exoneration after serving 31 years in prison for a rape he did not commit has been granted a hearing before the Tennessee Board of Parole.

Lawrence McKinney, 60, has fought government red tape for years seeking the exoneration since release from prison in 2009 after DNA evidence cleared him of the crime.

A formal exoneration would fully clear his name, and the parole board has granted a hearing on Sept. 27 to formally hear McKinney's case.

"I feel great," said state Rep. Mark Pody, R-Lebanon, who has advocated for McKinney since the start of this year. "Things are moving forward. He is going to have good legal representation so we can go ahead and give him the justice he deserves."

At the hearing, the parole board will review the case, which could include questions to McKinney and others. The board can also accept statements from those who support or oppose the exoneration, Tennessee Board of Parole spokeswoman Melissa McDonald said.

McKinney's record was expunged after his release, but he has never been exonerated, which would allow him to file for compensation. Expungement is a judicial process to clear a person's record of a conviction. Exoneration is an additional declaration of innocence awarded by the state.

The parole board reviews exoneration applications and makes a recommendation to the governor. The governor ultimately decides whether to grant an exoneration and is not bound by the parole board's recommendation.

[McKinney applied once before for exoneration after his release](#). The board recommended against exoneration and then-Gov. Phil Bredesen did not grant it, according the parole board. McKinney wasn't given a reason.

[McKinney recently hired attorneys David Raybin and Jack Lowery](#) to help with the process. "He's very happy and said he's looking forward to the hearing to present his case," Raybin said. McKinney was found guilty in 1978 and sentenced to 100 years for rape and 10 to 15 years for burglary after being incorrectly identified.

He came to Wilson County after his release, which is where his wife Dorothy resided. The couple married in 2010 after becoming pen pals while McKinney was in prison. *Reach Andy Humbles at 615-726-5939 and on Twitter [@AndyHumbles](#).*