

Help Joann Parks Get Clemency

OVERVIEW:

Joann Parks, who was wrongfully convicted of murdering her children in a tragic fire in 1989. The investigators and jury were misled by bad science, or no science at all. She continues to maintain her innocence. It's time for Joann to be free.

TAKE ACTION:

Ask California Governor Gavin Newsom to grant Joann Parks clemency.

BACKGROUND:

On the night of April 9, 1989, JoAnn Parks put her three children to sleep and went to bed. She woke up around midnight to the smell of smoke and the sound of her children screaming. A fire had erupted and it was so intense she couldn't get into her children's bedroom. She ran next door to her neighbor's house to call the police.

Tragically, no one was able to save her children. Although investigators initially believed the fire to be accidental, they ultimately concluded it was arson. Parks was arrested and put on trial, accused of starting the fire and murdering her children.

At Parks's trial, fire investigators testified the fire was caused by human origin, rather than by an electrical source. One investigator testified he believed there had actually been two fires: one starting in the living room and another starting in the children's bedroom. The presence of two points of origin pointed conclusively to a case of arson. If the fire started accidentally, there would have been one point of origin.

Parks was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

Fire science has changed dramatically since 1989. In 2011, an Arson Review Panel, led by John Lentini, a prominent scientific fire analyst, reviewed the evidence, reports, and expert testimony in Parks's case.

The Panel documented that the fire spread from a single origin in the living room, and quickly move into the children's bedroom. The Panel also considered the fire patterns near the closet door where one of the children was found. Contrary to the conclusions of the police investigators, the Panel determined there was no reliable evidence that something was barricading the door. Rather, the child likely took refuge from the fire in the closet.

Ultimately, the Panel concluded that, by modern standards, none of the allegedly incriminating evidence against Parks would withstand scrutiny today. The investigators and jury were misled by bad science, or no science at all.

Despite strong evidence that this tragic fire was an accident, Parks has spent nearly 20 years in prison. She continues to maintain her innocence.

TAKE ACTION: Ask California Governor Gavin Newsom to grant Joann Parks clemency.

LETTER WRITING TIPS:

- Be respectful and polite.
- Keep your tone formal.
- Stick to the facts; do not include judgement, feelings or political leanings.
- Be brief and concise.

SEND LETTERS TO:

Governor Gavin Newsom
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814
U.S.A.

SAMPLE LETTER:

Governor Newsom:

The case of Joann Parks has come to my attention. She has spent nearly 20 years in prison for the alleged killing of her children by arson. The evidence in her case proves otherwise, however.

In 2011, an Arson Review Panel, led by John Lentini, a prominent scientific fire analyst, reviewed the evidence, reports, and expert testimony in Parks's case. Ultimately, the Panel concluded that, by modern standards, none of the allegedly incriminating evidence against Parks would withstand scrutiny today. The investigators and jury were misled by bad science, or no science at all.

Given these facts, I respectfully request you grant Joann Parks clemency. She has suffered the loss of her children and her freedom. She deserves to start a new life after these tragedies and as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance for your immediate attention to this matter. I will be following this case closely, and appreciate your leadership on it.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your title, if applicable]

[Your organization, if applicable]

[Your address]

[City] [State] [Zip]

[Country]