Roemer says no to delay; officials ready for Jones’ Monday execution for murder

By The Associated Press

ANGOLA - Prison officials began preparing Saturday to execute a convicted child-killer after Gov. Buddy Roemer said he would not issue a delay merely to allow for death by lethal injection rather than the electric chair.

Andrew Lee “Flash” Jones is scheduled to die early Monday for the 1984 kidnapping, rape and murder of an 11-year-old girl whose mother he had dated.

“This man deserves what he is about to get,” Roemer said.

On Friday, the Louisiana Pardon Board recommended Jones’ execution be delayed until after Sept. 15, when the state switches from electrocution to lethal injection. However, Roemer quickly rejected that idea.

“I will not do that,” Roemer said. “I respect the pardon board, but I made a decision a month ago and announced it then. Until September 15, the electric chair is the law.”

Monday’s execution date is Jones’ 10th. The others were put off by appeals courts.

A request to stop the execution was pending before the U.S. Supreme Court. Warden John Whitley of the Louisiana State Penitentiary said security officers began preparations Saturday for the execution, the first in Louisiana since Dalton Prejean was executed on May 18, 1990 for killing a state trooper.

“We’re making sure we have everything in place,” Whitley said.

Jones, 35, will be moved from death row to a holding cell adjacent to the execution chamber on Sunday, Whitley said. He will be allowed to meet with family members and his attorney.

Whitney said he knew of no plans of an English schoolteacher who became Jones’ pen pal to meet with him again. Jane Officer of Birmingham visited with Jones at the prison on Wednesday after corresponding with him since May 1990.

Jones was convicted of killing Tumekica Michelle Jackson, who was abducted from her grandparents’ home in Baton Rouge as she slept. The victim was sexually assaulted and strangled. Her body was found in a canal about 15 hours after her grandparents realized she was missing.

Jones told the pardon board that he remembered nothing because he was drunk when the crime happened.

“There’s a chance I did it, a chance I didn’t. If I hadn’t been drunk, nothing like that would have happened,” he said.

The victim’s mother stopped dating Jones shortly before the slaying, according to testimony in Jones’ trial.

Roemer said he would meet with lawyers for both sides on Sunday, but was convinced that Jones is guilty and should die.

“I’ve read the facts. I’ve read the case file. I take these things very personally. I always give the defendant one last chance. But there is no question in my mind here. The man was found guilty by a jury of his peers and by every review board. He did a horrible, horrible thing.”

Jones would be the 20th person to die in Louisiana’s electric chair since capital punishment was reinstated and Robert Wayne Williams was put to death on Dec. 14, 1983 for killing a supermarket guard during a robbery.

Since a 1976 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that allowed states to resume executions, 148 people have been put to death nationwide.
Harold Couvillon's T-shirt expresses the sentiments of about 20 people at a prayer vigil on the Governor Mansion's front lawn Sunday to protest the death penalty and execution of Andrew Lee 'Flash' Jones.

CONTINUED FROM 1A

"There's a possible chance I did it, a possible chance I didn't do it. If I had not been drunk, nothing like that would have happened," he said.

But East Baton Rouge first assistant district attorney John Sinquefield said Jones knows quite well what he did that night and even tried to get rid of incriminating evidence. Sinquefield also said Jones tried to blame two other people, including his stepbrother.

Sinquefield said being drunk does not excuse a person from being responsible for his actions.

Asked why his life should be spared, Jones said, "I'm like anybody else...I don't want to die or anything like that."

Jones did not ask for a special last meal, Whitley said. "He said he really didn't want a last meal. He'd just eat the regular," he said.

On Friday, a federal judge and the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals refused to stop the execution of Jones, and Roemer rejected a state Pardon Board recommendation that he delay the execution until after Sept. 15 so Jones could die by lethal injection.

Roemer's rejection of the Pardon Board recommendation came quickly and on the same day the board made it.

At the Pardon Board hearing, Jones' attorneys claimed their client would be facing a life sentence for the murder of the Jackson girl if the jury had known Jones had mental problems.

Jones' trial attorney David Price said he did not know his client was being treated with drugs before, during and after his trial and that would have made a difference in the way he handled the trial, particularly in the penalty stage.

In addition, they said Jones' trial by an all-white jury was his death knell.

Jones' attorneys, with the Death Penalty Resource Center, issued a news release Sunday after Roemer refused to step in, claiming the governor had endorsed a "racially segregated jury's death sentence."