Gov. Roemer grants clemency to 36

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Four convicts who work at the Governor's Mansion — including three convicted murderers — are among those who have been granted clemency in the waning days of Gov. Buddy Roemer's administration.

In the last three weeks, Roemer has signed off on 36 pardons or reductions in prison sentences. One-third of the actions reduced life sentences, and some of the actions made convicted murderers eligible for immediate parole.

Sixteen of the 36 recent actions involve people out of prison who were seeking restoration of rights, such as the right to vote and bear arms.

But the remainder were actions that either reduced the time prisoners will serve or made them eligible for parole without reducing the original sentences.

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The four inmates who work at the mansion were among a batch of 13 clemency requests Roemer approved Jan. 2. He did 10 on Dec. 16, one on Dec. 17 and 12 on Dec. 23.

Roemer granted sentence reductions for Joseph Anderson, Ronald Cooper, Robert L. Gasery and William E. Thomas Sr. The men are part of an 11-inmate crew that has worked at the mansion during Roemer's term.

Anderson, convicted of second-degree murder in Tangipahoa Parish in 1977, and Cooper, sentenced to 30 years on a New Orleans armed robbery conviction, will be immediately eligible for parole as a result of Roemer's actions.

Gasery, convicted in 1980 of second-degree murder in Terrebonne Parish, will become eligible for parole in June 1993; and Thomas, who was convicted in 1973 of murder in Livingston Parish, will be eligible for parole in July.

Anderson, Gasery and Thomas were all serving life terms, and Cooper was serving a 30-year sentence.

Three of the cases involved East Baton Rouge Parish murder convictions. In each case, Roemer reduced life sentences to 60 years with parole eligibility after the inmates serve one-third of the time. Each also will get time off for good behavior.

Receiving reduced sentences were Billy Scif, Ronald Weathers and Donald Ray Gaines.

Self was 17 when he pleaded guilty to the 1972 murder of George Davis during a holdup of the Hernandez Ice Co.

Weathers was 19 when he was convicted in the shooting death of Willie Lee Warren. Prosecutors said Warren had been trying to talk to Weathers about a debt.

Gaines' conviction came in connection with the 1974 murder of Rita Decuir during an armed robbery of the Southside Grocery.

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Pardons

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Gaines did not fire the gun that killed the victim.

Other major area cases and Roemer's actions include:
- Commutation of Jerry Williams' 1971 life sentence in an Iberia Parish murder case to 45 years with immediate parole eligibility plus time off for good behavior.
- Reduction of Carl T. Taylor's 1973 Livingston Parish armed robbery sentence from 99 years to 30 years with parole eligibility after serving one-third of the time and time off for good behavior.
- Reduction of Isaac Welch's 1976 life sentence on a Terrebonne Parish second-degree murder conviction to 60 years with parole eligibility after one-third of the time and time off for good behavior.