

October 3, 2011  
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# Governor Approves AB 648; New Law Requires Victim Notification for Pardons

## *San Diego Case Spurs New Law*

San Diego County District Attorney [Bonnie M. Dumanis](#) announced today a new state law that requires victims and prosecutors to be notified when an application is made for commutation of a prison sentence. Late Tuesday Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 648, which was spearheaded by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, the parents of murder victim Luis Santos and carried by Assemblyman Marty Block. Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher co-authored the bill.

"AB 648 is a major victory for crime victims throughout the state of California," DA Dumanis said. "No longer will victims have the rugs pulled out from under them with a secretive commutation to help a friend. We are very appreciative to Assemblyman Marty Block for his leadership in carrying the legislation, to Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher who co-authored the bill and to the Governor for signing it."

AB 648 was in response to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's last-minute commutation of Esteban Nunez' sentence. Schwarzenegger commuted the sentence from 16 years in state prison to seven years. Nunez, along with a co-defendant pleaded guilty in 2009 to voluntary manslaughter and assault with a deadly weapon. The assault occurred during a fight near San Diego State University that left Luis Santos dead from knife wounds and three other victims injured. Nunez' guilty plea was accepted by the court and he was sentenced for his crimes in June of 2010. His case was being appealed when the commutation was suddenly announced by Governor Schwarzenegger on his last day in office.

Because of this law, victims will now have a chance to have their voices heard when a convicted criminal applies for clemency and prosecutors will now have a chance to make sure the Governor has all the facts of the case before deciding to grant clemency. The process now requires a written report to the legislature that also includes a copy of any application for pardon, reprieve or commutation. The law does not change the state constitution or limit the Governor's power to grant commutations.

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“This bill goes a long way in restoring the public’s confidence in the judicial system,” said Assemblyman Marty Block. “I am pleased that Governor Brown signed this bill despite the minor limitation it puts on a Governor, because it’s the right thing to do. I am sure that crime victim’s throughout the state are heartened by the outcome.”

Luis Santos was 22-years-old when he lost his life on a dark street corner near San Diego State. His friends Keith Robertson and Evan Henderson were stabbed and Brandon Sheerer was attacked by another suspect.

“This victory is bitter sweet, as Wednesday marks third anniversary that Luis Santos was killed,” DA Dumanis said. “A profound thank you to the Santos, Henderson, Robertson and Sheerer families for their strength and courage throughout the past year as we fought for this bill.”

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