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Governor Stops Parole for Cop Killer After DA Stephan Urges Reversal

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that Governor Gavin Newsom has reversed the Parole Board's decision to grant parole to Jesus Cecena, 59, who killed San Diego police officer, Archie Buggs, in 1978. The Governor's decision, on October 12, reverses the Parole Board's grant which occurred in June. Cecena's next parole hearing is in December 2021.

DA Stephan urged Gov. Newsom to reverse the Parole Board's decision in a letter, saying his parole would jeopardize public safety because Cecena minimized the true execution nature of his killing. Governor Jerry Brown previously reversed the Parole Board's grants in 2014, 2016 and 2017. Governor Newsom previously reversed one grant of parole in 2019. This latest action marks the fifth Governor reversal.

Deputy DA, Richard Sachs represented the Buggs family in a parole hearing via Skype video, in which he described Cecena's brutal and cold-hearted murder. District Attorney Investigators Anthony Pellegrino and Dave Collins also reinvestigated the gang motivation element of the murder which was an important factor for Governor Newsome. Cecena has been clinging to an implausible account that he murdered Officer Buggs to avoid getting in trouble with his father, but the Governor noted the real reason for the killing was to move up in his criminal street gang.

Officer Archie Buggs, 30, was shot four times after he stopped a car driven by Cecena, a gang member in the Skyline neighborhood who was 17 years-old-at the time. Cecena fired five times at Buggs, then paused, walked toward the fallen officer and fired a final bullet into his head at point blank range. The officer died on the street, his hand still on his service revolver.

"This defendant killed an on-duty police officer in cold blood and in spite of his claims to the contrary, he once again lacks honest insight and remorse into this heinous crime," DA Stephan said. "We appreciate the Governor's thoughtful analysis and ultimate decision to reverse parole and safeguard the public. Officer Buggs was one of the first African-American police officers in San Diego and he was a hero to his family, his law enforcement colleagues and to the entire San Diego community. We will continue to fight for justice on his behalf."

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Cecena was granted parole in 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018 and each time the grant was reversed. Cecena's parole also continues to be opposed by San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit and the San Diego Police Officers Association.

"Mr. Cecena still is unwilling to acknowledge the underlying or causative factors that are in evidence, specifically that he belonged to a gang where killing a peace officer was seen as an ultimate goal, that a more senior and respected gang member handed him a firearm so he could kill Officer Buggs, and that killing Officer Buggs was a way for Mr. Cecena to gain more respect and power within his gang," Gov. Newsom wrote in his decision. "Mr. Cecena has additional work to do in this area before he can be safely released."

Cecena was convicted of murder and was sentenced to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole on August 22, 1979. Because Cecena was 17 at the time he killed Officer Buggs, his sentence was reduced to a seven years-to-life term in March of 1982. Cecena's unstable social history continued during his incarceration; he received more than 10 violation reports for misconduct while in prison.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County District Attorney's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.