

Date set for Scottsboro Boys' pardon

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A petition for posthumous pardon for three of the "Scottsboro Boys" is scheduled for consideration by the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles on Nov. 21 at an open public meeting in Montgomery.

Charles Weems, Haywood Patterson and Andy Wright are eligible in accordance with the Scottsboro Boys Act.

Five other candidates – Olen Montgomery, Ozie Powell, Willie Roberson, Eugene Williams and Roy Wright are not eligible, according to the Board of Pardons and Paroles, because their convictions were overturned and charges dropped in 1937.

Clarence Norris was pardoned by former Gov. George Wallace in 1976. Norris died at the age of 76 in 1989, the last of the Scottsboro Boys.

The Scottsboro Boys Act changed Alabama law to allow pardons of certain deceased felons if compelling reasons could be identified showing that racial discrimination had contributed to unjust outcomes in their convictions.

On March 25, 1931, the nine black teenagers would forever be known as the Scottsboro Boys after being accused of raping two white women on a train traveling through Jackson County.

Eight of the nine boys were originally found guilty and sentenced to death in four separate trials in Scottsboro just days after the alleged incident occurred. A mistrial was declared in the case of 12-year-old Roy Wright.

The U.S. Supreme Court eventually overturned the verdicts under the 14th Amendment's due process clause. The court ruled that the right of the defendants to have competent legal counsel had been denied in the trials and ordered new trials.

A series of new trials was ordered, and each of the young men served between six and 19 years in prison. The Scottsboro Boys case led to two landmark rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court: the right to adequate counsel and the right to equal protection under the law.