



## OREGON INNOCENCE PROJECT STATEMENT ON THE U.S. SUPREME COURT'S DECISION IN *RAMOS V. LOUISIANA*

April 20, 2020

“Today’s decision ends a practice founded on ugly prejudices that even today has tended to exclude minority voices on juries from being given their full weight. Oregon’s non-unanimous jury law stems from our state’s shameful history of anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-immigrant hate. We should have put an end to it before now. Oregonians need to be able to have faith in jury verdicts, and that faith has been undermined by allowing decisions to be reached without all jurors being convinced of guilt or innocence.

It has long been a concern of ours that non-unanimity increases the risk of innocent Oregonians being wrongfully convicted. Research on how juries deliberate and reach a final decision shows non-unanimous juries can mean less thorough analysis of the facts by jurors, less deliberation, and reaching quicker and more incorrect verdicts. The process of having to convince all members of the jury of a particular verdict seems to have a protective effect against wrong decisions. Under a unanimous system, dissenting jurors encourage a vigorous debate in pursuit of agreement that supports the proper functioning of our criminal justice system. Wrongful convictions that may arise from a non-unanimous verdict do not solely harm the person convicted and their family. The victim is denied justice and the real perpetrator remains free, potentially to go on to commit further crimes.

Our former clients, Josh Horner and Nick McGuffin respectively served eighteen months and ten years in prison following wrongful convictions by non-unanimous juries. We are currently reviewing several other cases with non-unanimous verdicts. The case of Brad Holbrook (who was not our client) is another example of a wrongful conviction by a non-unanimous jury. Mr. Holbrook spent more than six years in prison and waited 19 years in total before his conviction was overturned.”

*Statement to be attributed to Brittney Plessner, Senior Staff Attorney, Oregon Innocence Project.*

*Notes to Editors: We respectfully request that you do not use the shorthand “the Innocence Project” to refer to the Oregon Innocence Project because that is in fact the name of a separate organization based in New York.*