



New Mexico CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 8324
Santa Fe, NM 87504
505.992.0050
www.nmcdla.org

President
Matthew Coyte
Albuquerque

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

President-Elect
Margaret Strickland
Las Cruces

September 8, 2016

Vice President
Molly Schmidt Nowara
Albuquerque

Dear Mr. President:

Secretary
Angelica Hall
Albuquerque

The New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (NMCDLA) consists of over five hundred criminal defense lawyers, law students, and other defense professionals in New Mexico. NMCDLA provides support, education, and training for attorneys who represent persons accused of crime. NMCDLA also advocates fair and effective criminal justice in the courts, the legislature and in the community. NMCDLA now joins the thousands of individuals and groups around the globe urging you to grant Executive Clemency to Leonard Peltier.

Treasurer
Barry Porter
Albuquerque

Executive Director
Cathy Ansheles

Mr. Peltier is a Native American activist who has been incarcerated for nearly 40 years after being convicted in connection with the deaths of two agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Despite overwhelming evidence of Government misconduct—including the coercion and intimidation of witnesses, the utilization of false testimonies, and the concealment of a ballistics test reflecting his innocence—Mr. Peltier has been denied a new trial. Mr. Peltier has been continuously denied parole since becoming eligible in 1986 despite his sincere and documented effort to promote peace and healing both inside and outside the prison community.

Legislative Coordinator
Rikki-Lee Chavez

NMCDLA reviewed the available court opinions, writings, and other texts associated with this case prior to drafting this letter. This topic was discussed amongst our board, and the passage below was particularly important in helping our organization reach our decision.

"[T]he FBI used improper tactics in securing Peltier's extradition from Canada and in otherwise investigating and trying the Peltier case. Although our court decided that these actions were not grounds for reversal, they are, in my view, factors that merit consideration in any petition for leniency filed . . . We as a nation must treat Native Americans more fairly . . . Favorable action by the President in the Leonard Peltier case would be an important step in this regard." Hon. Gerald Heaney Letter to Sen. Daniel Inouye (Apr. 18, 1991).

After careful consideration, NMCDLA has concluded that Judge Heaney's position reflects the best opportunity to finally achieve a just result in this case. Regardless of whether you agree that Mr. Peltier sits in prison today as an innocent man, Executive Clemency is appropriate when taking into account all factors relevant to such a petition. NMCLDA now joins many other organizations and individuals—including but not limited to Amnesty International, Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchu, the Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, and the late and recently canonized Mother Theresa—in urging you to add to your legacy as a President committed to a justice system that is not solely focused on retribution by taking steps to grant Mr. Peltier immediate and unconditional release through a grant of Executive Clemency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Coyte". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matthew Coyte
NMCDLA President

cc: Office of the Pardon Attorney
1425 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 11000
Washington, D.C. 20530