

Kevin Burns Clemency Support Letters

Goal: To convince Governor Lee that he wants to spare Kevin Burns' life. It is the Governor's choice. He has the authority to spare Kevin, but he needs to be convinced to use it. The goal is not to argue that *must* spare Kevin. Instead, we need to touch Governor Lee's heart, so that he *wants* to spare Kevin.

To give us the best chance of achieving our goal, let us share a few fundamental letter writing rules that should be followed. And let us share some general guidance that may help you write the most persuasive letter.

Please, do not be daunted by all this advice. We appreciate all letters of support. We can use nine-page fact-filled letters, and we can use letters that say nothing more than, "Please grant Kevin Burns clemency. He is loved."

Basic Fundamentals:

1. Letters should be addressed to Governor Bill Lee.
2. Original letters should be mailed to:
Ed Yarbrough, Clemency Counsel
% Megan Wartner, Federal Public Defender
810 Broadway, Suite 200
Nashville, TN 37203
3. Email original letter to Megan_Wartner@fd.org
4. **Letters should not be mailed directly to the Governor. We want to submit the letters collectively.**
5. Letters should be signed in ink. If possible, do not email an unsigned word document. A scanned, signed copy is preferred.
6. The focus of the letter must be positive and must be on Kevin.

Additional Guidance:

Not all of this advice will apply to everyone, but please consider it.

1. **Speak sincerely from your heart.** Despite all advice included here, the best letters will not follow a script. Love is more important than eloquence.
2. **Let the Governor know who you are.** Let him know, as appropriate, what community you come from, where you work, what church you attend, and any other details that will make you a real person in his eyes.
3. **Let the Governor know how you might know Kevin.** If you know Kevin personally, make that clear. If you have not yet met Kevin, but have been touched by his ministry or example, please say so.
4. **Let the Governor know how Kevin has positively impacted you.** What about Kevin's life, story, or message has moved you? What about Kevin makes your life a little better?

5. **If you can, share examples of what Kevin has done for you.** Concrete real examples of Kevin's words and deeds are very helpful, if you have them.
6. **This letter should be about Kevin and why he is uniquely deserving of clemency.** Statements of general opposition to the death penalty will be less effective.
7. **However, if you support the death penalty but believe Kevin is a unique person who does not deserve such punishment, please make this clear.**
8. **Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor said there is "a very robust probability" that Kevin Burns did not kill anyone.** Those who know Kevin well are convinced he did not kill anyone. If you believe that he did not kill anyone, feel free to say so. If you believe it is unfair that he is facing death when the other defendants are on parole or were never prosecuted, feel free to say this. But do not feel compelled to argue the specific facts of the crime, or to make legal arguments—that is the role of the lawyers.
9. **Refer to Kevin Burns as you refer to Kevin Burns.** That may be "Mr. Burns", "Kevin", "Pastor Kevin" or even "KB". Whatever name you use, please make clear at the start of the letter that you are writing on behalf of Kevin Burns.
10. **Please do not challenge or question the Governor's faith.** No one likes to be bullied into doing something – even the right thing.
11. **Remain positive and hopeful.** Proactively encourage other people who have been affected by Kevin's life, story, or message to write to Governor Lee on his behalf. The more genuine, heartfelt letters, the better. If your friends have yet to meet Kevin, that is alright. So long as his message moves them, they should feel free to write on his behalf. We want to inundate the Governor with love for Kevin Burns.