



# COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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News release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Kenosha County executive, district attorney join victim's family in opposing parole for convicted murderer Eric Nelson**

KENOSHA – Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser and District Attorney Michael Graveley today joined the family of murder victim Joseph Vite in strongly opposing the parole of convicted murderer Eric S. Nelson.

Nelson is serving a life sentence for the 1985 killing that a judge at the time referred to as “an assassination.” Recently, however, he was transferred to a minimum-security, pre-release facility near Green Bay, and he is expected to have a hearing before the Wisconsin Parole Commission in May.

In preparation for this hearing, the family of Joseph Vite has launched an online petition drive in opposition to Nelson’s release. Kreuser also announced today that he is sending a letter to a mass list of elected officials in Kenosha, Brown and Outagamie counties, urging them to also fight Nelson’s release, as a matter of public safety.

Kreuser and Graveley said they are concerned Nelson will reoffend if he is released from prison.

“My priority as county executive is to keep the residents of Kenosha County as safe and secure as possible,” Kreuser said. “The release of Eric Nelson will only serve to diminish that safety and security.”

Nelson was convicted of first-degree intentional homicide for his role in killing Vite. He acted alongside Daniel Dower, a foster son of Vite’s, who had conspired with Nelson to plan the murder for several months.

Vite, a well-respected businessman in the community, arrived at his Bristol home on the evening of Jan. 16, 1985, and was ambushed by Dower and Nelson, who were wielding Vite’s hunting rifles. Vite was shot first in the elbow by Dower, before Nelson fired the fatal shot to his head with a .308 rifle.

Nelson and Dower then fled in Vite's car and made it to Missouri before they were arrested. In the car after the arrest, investigators found four rifles, a shotgun and a pellet gun; three of the rifles were loaded.

Graveley said he distinguishes this case from many other crimes of murder because Nelson was recruited to assist in ending a human life, for a very marginal material gain.

"This is not a crime of passion," Graveley said. "This is not a person who had a direct motivation to kill somebody because of a personal grievance."

"From my perspective," Graveley added, "these are rare people who are capable of this sort of outrageous criminal behavior, and these are people the community needs to be protected from for life."

Ed Vite, a brother of Joseph Vite's, said the crime continues to have a profound effect on the family.

After following Nelson's requests for parole closely for several years – often writing letters of opposition to release in advance of parole hearings – Vite said the family was shocked to receive a call from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections earlier this month, informing them of a possible move to a minimum-security facility. The Vite family then learned the move had already been made.

"We don't understand how this has gotten to this point," Ed Vite said. "We just hope the Parole Commission will listen to what we have to say. We are very grateful for the support we are receiving from the county, and from our friends in the community."

The Vite family's petition in opposition to Nelson's release is available for the public to sign online, at <http://bit.ly/NelsonParolePetition>. A weblog containing more information about Joseph Vite's murder may be viewed at <https://keepamurdererbehindbars.home.blog/>.

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