



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on December 3, 2009

Huckabee Showed Clemency to Cop Killer Clemmons

On the morning of November 29, Maurice Clemmons entered the Cafe Forza coffee house in Spanaway, Washington, pulled out a handgun, and opened fire at four Lakewood Police officers who were sitting together in the shop. All four officers were killed.

When the suspect became known, namely Maurice Clemmons who had a violent criminal history and was convicted of robbery and theft in 1989 in Arkansas, a manhunt ensued. On the morning of December 1, Clemmons was cornered and shot dead by police, putting a permanent end to his life of crime.



But questions remain as to how such a violent offender could have gotten back out on the streets. It turned out that Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee (R) commuted Clemmons sentence in 2000, and the Arkansas parole board subsequently paroled him. Then, in Washington state, he had been charged with assault on a police officer and rape, but was released on bail.

Huckabee's aides have tried to paint Clemmons' release from prison as a joint mistake of officials in both Arkansas and Washington state. But Huckabee issued more than 1,000 commutations and pardons during his 10 years in office. This is more than his three predecessors combined. He has a lot of explaining to do, and there may be future incidents given the large number of criminals he has helped to set free.

As recently as during the 2008 presidential campaign, Huckabee faced a similar situation when it became known that he had a hand in the release of convicted rapist Wayne DuMond. Dumond was later convicted of another rape and murder.

Conservative blogger Michelle Malkin dubbed the situation with Clemmons as "Huckabee's Willie Horton," comparing it to how the 1988 presidential campaign of then-Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis (D) was damaged when it became known that he played a role in Horton's release and Horton ended up committing more crimes.

Republican strategist Ron Bonjean sees that Huckabee is in trouble regarding any presidential aspirations: "This story is political quicksand, and if the Republican conservative establishment doesn't throw him a lifeline immediately, it could be very damaging to a presidential run."

Robert Herzfeld, a former Arkansas prosecutor who strongly disagreed with some of Huckabee's clemencies, stated, "When you put that many people out of jail, it's inevitable someone is going to commit more crimes."

Prior to the Clemmons incident, Republican polls ranked Huckabee in the same category as Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and former Alaska governor Sarah Palin as prime choices for the 2012 presidential campaign. The effect of the Clemmons pardon on these sentiments remains to be



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seen.

The men and women in blue suffer so much for the safety of the public, and to have four of their number gunned down in cold blood because a convicted criminal was released when he shouldn't have been sparks a rightly indignant demand for answers.

Whether those answers are ever forthcoming, they won't take away the grief of the survivors, yet there should be accountability for Clemmons' release. That may just come in the form of Huckabee forfeiting his bid for the White House in 2012.

Photo: AP Images



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