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NARSOL DEMANDS ANSWERS FROM PARISH OFFICIALS

Albuquerque, NM / February 10, 2017—The National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws – NARSOL — demands answers from Tangipahoa Parish officials regarding the savage beating and death of Tommy Joe Smith while in custody for a technical probation violation. According to media accounts, parish officials have thus far declined to discuss their policies for the housing of those who have been convicted of sexual crimes.

NARSOL demands that parish officials respond to the following questions:

- Did Mr. Smith see a classification officer prior to his placement in general population?
- If not, how was the decision made to classify him as appropriate for general population?
- Does the Tangipahoa Parish jail have adequate staff to monitor the inmate population?
- What was the staff to inmate ratio at the time of the incident?
- Does the facility have direct supervision into the housing unit where Mr. Smith was housed?
- Does the facility have emergency buttons or other mechanisms for an inmate to summon help?

Tommy Joe Smith was convicted in October, 2015, of a sexual battery charge involving a juvenile female. He was given a probated sentence, and part of the probation requirements was his not having a Facebook account. When his probation officer learned of an old Facebook account that Smith had not closed, he violated him, and Smith was arrested January 30, 2017, and placed in a general population dorm in the Tangipahoa Parish jail.

That night he was attacked by eleven other inmates, ranging in age from 18 to 38. He was beaten and savaged so viciously that the funeral home, in advising the family against an open casket due to his condition, said his was “the worst body they have ever had to work on.” Personnel at the jail compared the attack to a “shark feeding-frenzy.”

Brenda Jones, executive director of NARSOL, commented about the responsibilities of the various parties involved. “It is the responsibility of the convicted person,” she said, “to be in compliance with his conditions while on probation. But it is even more contingent upon law enforcement to provide safe housing for inmates.” She continued, “They place the individual in a locked facility; he has no option but to be there; he has no way to defend himself against violent attack. If law enforcement does not provide the means to keep prisoners safe from harm, law enforcement must bear the responsibility when harm comes.”

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENSE LAWS
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“Tommy Joe Smith was the father of two children. They, and his other family and friends, want answers,” concluded Jones. “So do we.”

NARSOL calls upon the officials in Louisiana, and indeed in every state, to protect their prisoners. To fail to do so is criminal.

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