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## Judge rejects fingerprint testing in Slover case presented by Downstate Innocence Project

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By HUEY FREEMAN - H&R Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, March 17, 2010 12:01 am

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DECATUR - Six weeks after the Downstate Illinois Innocence Project presented its arguments for testing a latent fingerprint as a step toward overturning the murder convictions of the Slovers, a judge ruled that the print is not suitable for testing.

At the hearing in the courtroom of Assistant Circuit Court Judge Timothy Steadman on Feb. 1, project attorney Peter Wise presented a fingerprint expert who stated that a latent fingerprint found on a Bruce-Findlay Bridge railing over Lake Shelbyville was suitable for identification.

The Innocence Project had hoped this print, found near the spot where the remains of Karyn Hearn Slover were believed to have been thrown into the lake in trash bags in 1996, would lead to a new trial for Michael Slover, Jeannette Slover and Michael Slover Jr.

Karyn Hearn Slover had been married to Michael Slover Jr., who was sentenced to 60 years in prison, along with his parents, after a lengthy trial.

But Steadman ruled that the latent print, which was discovered by Illinois State Police investigators and presented to the jury in the 2002 trial, was not suitable to be tested in the FBI Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System.

An expert witness, Mary McCarthy, Illinois State Police latent print training coordinator, testified at the hearing that there were not enough landmarks on the latent print to make an absolute match with a recorded print. She said she also had reached that conclusion earlier, during the Slover trial, which is why it was not tested at that time.

In his ruling, Steadman stated that the testimony of McCarthy and another expert fingerprint witness presented by the Macon County State's Attorney's Office outweighed the testimony of the Slover witness, fingerprint expert Kenneth Moses, who said the print could be positively matched.

"Because the latent print is not suitable for the requested testing, there is no potential to produce new evidence materially relevant to the defendants' assertion of actual innocence," Steadman wrote.

Michael Slover, 63, is in the Pontiac Correctional Center, with a projected parole date of July 27, 2032, according to the Illinois Department of Corrections Web site. Michael Slover Jr., 39, is in the Menard Correctional Center, with the same parole date as his father. Jeannette Slover, 62, is in Dwight Correctional Center, with a projected parole date of July 27, 2030.

The Downstate Illinois Innocence Project, based at the University of Illinois at Springfield, seeks exoneration for wrongfully convicted downstate inmates and works to reform the criminal justice system.

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