



Newsletter

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Robert Weinstock

Drs. Billick and Raff have organized an outstanding program for our March meeting in Houston. I hope you are planning to attend. There is an opera and a good dinner to benefit ASAP on the Thursday evening of the meeting and I hope attendees will consider that too. The meeting will be at The Marriott Hotel at the Houston Galleria right next to good restaurants and shopping and not far from excellent muse-

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ums. Menninger's is now located in Houston and the Space Center in Houston can be visited as part of an excursion so I hope you will come and consider bringing your families.

ASAP recently has been involved in briefs regarding some important legal cases of significance to adolescents. ASAP led the way in sponsoring a brief in a case currently under consideration by the United States Supreme Court regarding the death penalty for adolescents who are 16 or 17 years old. The American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law followed us on this issue. Drs. Wellek and Ratner initiated the process and worked on the issue much as they did in the late 80s when ASAP was pretty much alone and wrote a brief helpful in the Supreme Court ruling against the death penalty for adolescents under 16 but at that time the Court found it permissible for adolescents over 16.

We hope they will change their minds on that now much as they recently did with mentally retarded individuals who are no longer subject to the death penalty. In the mental retardation case, the swing votes based their decision on changing views in the states and the country. Your President was instrumental in getting the brief's language changed in the adolescent death penalty brief to make it acceptable to the APA and AAPL and more accurately reflect the state of scientific knowledge. The most important change was to indicate that immaturity as reflected in brain scans of adolescents in parts of the brain that deal with relevant capacities was supportive of other data indicating adolescent immaturity but did not itself prove adolescents were incapable of mature thinking. It was helpful that I am also a member of the APA's Committee on Judicial Action. In fact, I became the

THE DEATH PENALTY



Mark Wellek

And Now We Wait... The Continuing Assault Against The Adolescent Death Penalty

It has finally happened! The Amicus Brief opposing the adolescent death penalty, authorized and originally sponsored by ASAP, was submitted to the United States Supreme Court in August. After Brief writing got started, the AMA, APA, the Academy and AAPPL (American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law) all signed on. The case was argued October 13 - Roper VS Simmons. The Brief described the lack of adolescent brain development related to impulsive behavior. I had the opportunity that day along with Jay Giedd of the National Institute of Mental Health to appear on PBS television, The News Hour With Jim Lehrer, in a segment on adolescent brain development and the death penalty for teen offenders. Giedd, who is studying "normal" kids with FMRI's (functional magnetic resonance imaging) on a serial basis (1-2 times per