Inmates Cleared for Tuesday's Vote

NASHVILLE (UPI) — The way has been cleared for inmates at the state's prisons to cast ballots in next Tuesday's general election.

The state Supreme Court rejected an appeal of a lower court ruling that opened the way for inmates to vote from prison for the first time in state history.

Supreme Court Clerk Ramsey Leathers said the application for an appeal filed by the state Attorney General's office was rejected by the high court without comment.

The ruling means that all 6,200 convicts in the state's 16 institutions who have registered will be allowed to vote.

Last month, Chancellor Robert S. Brandt voided a statute that allows those convicted of murder and kidnapping to vote, but denies that right to others convicted of lesser "infamous crimes."

His ruling came after federal Judge Robert McRae ruled in August that all prisoners not convicted of "infamous crimes" should be allowed to vote.

Under Tennessee law, "infamous crimes" include such offenses as arson, horse stealing, breaking into outhouses, destroying a will and incest, but such offenses as murder, kidnapping and drug-related offenses are not defined as "infamous crimes."

Brandt's ruling was upheld by the state Court of Appeals, but the state Attorney General's office wanted the state Supreme Court to hear the case.