Convicted Assassin James Earl Ray Seeking Clemency

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NASHVILLE, Tenn., Oct. 25 (AP) — James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., is seeking executive clemency as part of a continuing effort to be freed from his 99-year prison sentence.

In a letter last month to the state Board of Pardon and Paroles, Ray asked for an application to obtain an executive clemency hearing. The board recommends clemency candidates to the governor.

"Without going into details at this time, if the board grants me a hearing, I will attempt to present to the board exculpatory evidence and related matter, including those responsible for financing the MLK homicide," Ray said in his letter.

Ray, 52, is confined at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Petros, Tenn. Since being sentenced on March 11, 1969, Ray has escaped once and is reported to have made at least three other attempts to break out.

In August 1978, Ray testified before the House Assassinations Committee in an attempt to prove he was not at the murder scene when the civil rights leader was gunned down in Memphis.

Ray pleaded guilty to the April 4, 1968, murder, but later recanted his plea, saying it had been coerced from him.

Nevin Trammell Jr., state paroles board chairman, acknowledged Friday that Ray had requested a clemency hearing application.

Gov. Lamar Alexander said though his press secretary that he rarely grants executive clemency.