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## Lifer bring his quest for freedom to governor

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Temujin Kensu -- or Frederick Freeman, as he remains known to the Michigan Department of Corrections -- has had more shots at freedom than almost any prison lifer in state history.

A loser in multiple appeals since his 1987 first-degree murder conviction in St. Clair County, Freeman finally scored in October when a federal judge in Detroit overturned the verdict (he remains behind bars as prosecutors appeal that ruling).

Freeman, 47, also is one of four Michigan prisoners whose request for commutation of sentence remains before Gov. Jennifer Granholm as she enters the final days of her tenure in office. He probably shouldn't count on clemency.

The state's parole and commutations board appeared skeptical about freedom for Freeman at his two-day commutation hearing this fall after hearing vigorous opposition from law enforcement and the victim's family. Granholm has dispensed more clemency than any of her recent predecessors, but only once when it hadn't been recommended by the board.

Unlike many prisoners, whose only hope lies in compassion from the governor,

Freeman can be expected to fight on regardless. And after 24 years behind bars, he finally has a little wind at his back.

Freeman has been professing his innocence since before he was even arrested in the execution-style slaying of a 19-year-old community college student, Scott Macklem.

Freeman -- who changed his name after adopting the practice of Buddhism in prison -- insisted he didn't know Macklem, who was engaged to one of Freeman's ex-girlfriends at the time. He said he was in the Upper Peninsula when the shooting occurred.

A throng of private detectives, journalists and inmate advocates have championed Freeman's cause through the years. None more so than his wife, a Swartz Creek woman he met while he was in prison.

All of their efforts were unavailing, however, until U.S. District Judge Denise Page Hood ruled in October that errors in his 1987 trial tainted the verdict. Kenu/Freeman remains in custody at the Saginaw Correctional Facility.