

Jury orders death for molester who raped, killed Megan Kanka

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TRENTON, N.J. — A jury yesterday ordered the death penalty for a child molester whose rape and strangling of his 7-year-old neighbor led to passage of Megan's Law.

The jury rejected defense arguments that it should spare Jesse Timmendequas' life because a childhood of violence and abuse left him unable to control his lust for little girls like Megan Kanka.

Timmendequas, 36, blinked quickly when the verdict was read and began to shake nervously, but his face remained expressionless. Spectators outside the courthouse applauded.

As the clerk asked each juror, "Is this your verdict?" some seemed to be choking back tears as they answered.

The same jury that convicted Timmendequas on May 30 of murder, aggravated sexual assault and kidnapping decided unanimously that he should receive death by injection rather than life without parole.

Timmendequas lived across the street from the little girl in suburban



Jesse Timmendequas, who read an emotionless apology Wednesday, was sentenced to death by injection for murdering and raping Megan Kanka, 7.

Hamilton Township. He lured her into his house to see his puppy, then raped and beat her, strangled her with a belt and dumped the body in a park nearby.

The 1994 slaying caused even more outrage when it was learned that Timmendequas had two prior sex-crime convictions: for a 1981 attack on a 5-year-old he lured into the woods, and for an attempted sexual assault the following year on a 7-year-old.

Megan's parents, Richard and Maureen Kanka, channeled their grief into a campaign for laws to notify a community when a sex offender moves in. New Jersey and most other states passed versions of "Megan's Law," and President Clinton signed a national version last year.

The jury of six men and six women deliberated a little more than 10 hours over two days. They determined that aggravating factors presented by the prosecution — that Timmendequas killed the girl as part of a kidnapping and rape and that he killed her to avoid detection — outweighed mitigating factors including the defendant's sordid childhood.

Attorney Roy Greenman had argued that Timmendequas should get life in prison because he was sexually and physically abused as a child. Greenman also said Timmendequas expressed remorse for killing Megan.

Prosecutor Kathryn Flicker acknowledged his childhood "was not a bed of roses." But she asked: "Where does individual responsibility fit into the whole scheme? He was responsible as an adult, as we all are."