

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

April 20, 1999 LB 76

Supreme Court vacated Douglas' stay, and the Rosenberg's were executed that night. That is not all there is to the case, but my time is up. I'll put my light on.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD PRESIDING

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Chambers. For discussion on the Chambers amendment to the committee amendments, Senator Dwite Pedersen.

SENATOR Dw. PEDERSEN: Give my time to Senator Chambers.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you, Senator Dwite Pedersen. Mr. President, the reason I am presenting this case is to show that even where the law would prevent a person from being executed there are factors outside the court room, apart from the crime alleged against the condemned prisoners, which may result in an execution. That brings me to what Justice Douglas said in a book that he wrote later, called The Court Years. It was his autobiography. And this is what he pointed out, upholding that stay would have meant only that the district court would consider the question whether the penalty was proper, and make a ruling. Should the stay be upheld? Upholding the stay would mean only that the district court would consider the question and rule on it before the fall Court of Appeals could pass on it...the full Court of Appeals. It would then be ripe for a decision by us in October. In other words, the district court could handle their end of it. The Appellate Court could handle their end of it. It would be then available to the Supreme Court in a matter of months. And this is the statement that I hope you will consider in reviewing what we're offering you here today. No harm would be done. The Rosenberg's were behind bars. They could be executed in October, as well as in June. But we could not muster the fifth vote. The stay was vacated and the Rosenberg's were executed. The reason Justice Douglas became so upset about this case was that in later years he talked to one of the judges on the court where the sentence had been handed down. The judge he talked to was Judge Jerome Frank. This judge said that the key point about the law that I've discussed had never been raised prior to