

da " www.news.com.au "

August 09, 2009 06:50am

Man serves 23 years in jail for rape.
Released after DNA test proves innocence.
Test identifies two possible perpetrators.

A TEXAS man sentenced to life in prison has been released after 23 years behind bars after DNA tests proved his innocence, the man's lawyer said today.

A judge in Texas released Ernest Sonnier on bond on Friday, said lawyer Alba Morales, who works for the Innocence Project advocacy group.

Sonnier, 46, was convicted for a Christmas Eve 1985 rape that tests show he did not commit.

"This is a complicated case, but the bottom line is simple: Ernest Sonnier is innocent, and his long nightmare is coming to an end," Mr Morales said.

"We have conducted nine rounds of DNA testing on multiple pieces of evidence for the last 18 months. Not a shred of evidence ties Ernest to this crime, but DNA testing has identified the two apparent perpetrators," Mr Morales said.

Sonnier's mother Altha Davis said she always knew her son was innocent because they were together when the crime was allegedly committed.

According to the Innocence Project, Texas is the US state with the highest number of prisoners found to be innocent following DNA testing.

Of the 241 inmates that were found innocent thanks to DNA testing since 1989, 38 are in Texas, the group said.