

Facts about Arkansas' Plan to Execute Seven Men in Ten Days

Current Situation

Arkansas' supply of midazolam is set to expire on April 30th. To use this drug before it expires, the state has scheduled 7 executions (down from 8 after one man was given clemency) between April 17 (Easter Monday) and April 27. Two are scheduled each day on April 17, 20, and 24, and one is scheduled April 27.

Quick Facts about Arkansas Death Penalty

- Current Death Row Population: 36. Arkansas' plan would execute over 20% of current death row inmates.
- Number of Executions since 1976: 27. Arkansas has executed the 13th most people of any US state since the return of the death penalty in 1976.
- Last execution: November 28, 2005. It has been 11.5 years since Arkansas last executed someone.
- Lethal injection: Arkansas' 3-drug cocktail consists of midazolam, vecuronium bromide, and potassium chloride.
- Clemency: The Governor of Arkansas, Asa Hutchinson, has the authority to grant clemency.

Concerns about Arkansas' Execution Plan

- Unprecedented quantity: Since capital punishment resumed in 1977, no state has executed as many people in as short a time period as Arkansas proposes to do.
- Midazolam: This drug used in Arkansas' lethal injection cocktail is extremely controversial. It is meant to knock out inmates and render them numb so that ensuing injections cause no pain. The Supreme Court ruled in 2015 (5-4 decision) that the drug's use does not constitute cruel and unusual punishment, yet it has been linked to botched executions in Arizona, Ohio, Alabama and Oklahoma.
- Corrections Workers' Health: There are significant concerns about the psychological challenges and severe toll that so many executions in a short period of time will have on the corrections workers involved with the executions. 23 corrections workers sent a letter to Governor Hutchinson expressing these worries. Numerous former wardens involved with executions have also been vocal about their concerns.
- Citizen Witnesses: Arkansas state law requires that at least 6 private citizens witness each execution. Arkansas has had trouble finding enough witnesses and has been publicly recruiting volunteers, even at Rotary Club meetings.

Public Advocacy

- The Catholic Church has opposed the death penalty for decades, and Arkansas' Catholic bishop, Anthony B. Taylor from the Diocese of Little Rock, has strongly advocated that the upcoming executions be halted. In a letter to Governor Hutchinson, he wrote, "These men...retain the God-given dignity of any human life, which must be respected and defended from conception to natural death."
- On Good Friday (April 14), the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and many partners will hold a rally at the Arkansas Capitol to publicly oppose the scheduled executions. Additionally, this Coalition will deliver a petition to Governor Hutchinson with thousands of signatures calling for a halt to the upcoming executions.

Information compiled from [Death Penalty Information Center](#).

Brief Profiles of 7 Men Scheduled for Execution

Bruce Ward

- Execution date: April 17; Sentenced to death: 1997
- Victim: Rebecca Lynn Doss
- Ward was diagnosed with schizophrenia after conviction, and his lawyers argue that killing him would violate Supreme Court ban on executing those deemed “insane.”

Don Davis

- Execution date: April 17; Sentenced to death: 1991
- Victim: Jane Daniel
- Davis’ lawyers argue that he has intellectual disabilities but a comprehensive mental health evaluation has never been completed. Davis has apologized for his crime.

Stacey Johnson

- Execution date: April 20; Sentenced to death: 1997
- Victim: Carol Heath
- Johnson was picked from a lineup by Heath’s 6-year-old daughter, Ashley. Johnson’s attorneys argue that Heath’s daughter was pressured by family and law enforcement to identify him. Ashley Heath has publicly forgiven Johnson and does not want him executed. Johnson has always maintained his innocence.

Ledell Lee

- Execution date: April 20; Sentenced to death: 1995
- Victim: Debra Reese
- Lee’s case was marked by a series of defense attorneys who provided inadequate counsel. Lee’s current attorneys also believe he has an intellectual disability, which has never been presented as mitigating evidence. Lee maintains his innocence.

Jack Jones

- Execution date: April 24; Sentenced to death: 1996
- Victim: Mary Phillips
- Evidence of Jones’ bipolar disorder, regular hallucinations, sexual abuse, and suicide attempts were never presented as mitigating factors. He had committed himself to a psychiatric facility months before the murder. Furthermore, his trial lawyers spent less than \$6,650 on his defense, tens of thousands of dollars less than is normal.

Marcel Williams

- Execution date: April 24; Sentenced to death: 1997
- Victim: Stacy Errickson
- In 2007, a federal judge reversed Williams’s death sentence after evidence of severe sexual and physical abuse was presented. But the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned this and reinstated his death sentence.

Kenneth Williams

- Execution date: April 27; Sentenced to death: 2000
- Victim: Cecil Boren
- Williams’ trial defenders failed to present evidence of physical abuse from his father or of his severe learning disabilities. Williams has become a Christian in prison and has taken full responsibility for his crime.

Information compiled from [Death Penalty Information Center](#) and [The Marshall Project](#).