

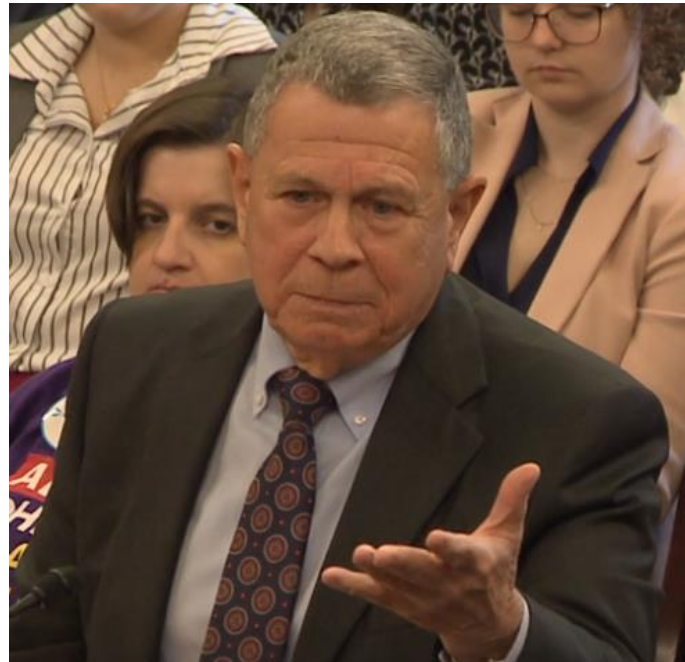
TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Dennis Watkins, Prosecutor
Repeat Violent Offenders newsletter
UPDATE: November 14, 2024

Watkins tells Senate panel: Keep the death penalty, it has been part of our Ohio history since 1803

Trumbull County Prosecutor Dennis Watkins appeared before the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, to give reasons why the state death penalty law should remain intact.

Watkins also urged President-Elect Donald Trump to execute the notorious Boston Marathon bomber as one of the first acts of his new administration. This act should follow in the footsteps of the



federal government's execution of Timothy McVey, the Oklahoma City bomber.

Watkins also noted that previously, then President Trump enforced the federal death penalty law, carrying out 14 executions.

The longtime prosecutor, representing the state Prosecuting Attorneys Association, was elected on November 5 to an 11th term. Watkins has seen three of his death row defendants executed out of 20 death penalty cases tried.

Watkins talked for about 20 minutes during the third hearing of the judiciary panel at the state capitol in Columbus. He joined others who told legislators that Senate Bill 101 would take away a major deterrent to crime.

Senate Bill 101, sponsored by Senators Nickie J. Antonio and Stephen A. Huffman, would abolish the state's long-standing death penalty law.

"This state needs to have a big stick for the worst of the worst," Watkins said. "The (state's) death penalty law is constitutional. It has been carried out 24

times (in 2024) by eight other states. Our law needs to be enforced. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

Watkins admitted the law could be reformed, but he pleaded with the senators, "don't eliminate it."

Watkins also addressed the issue pertaining to incoming 47th U.S. chief executive, Donald Trump.

"I expect and I hope that the Boston Marathon bomber, whose death sentence and conviction was fought for by the Biden administration, that our new president will do what he did when he was president before... carry out this execution.

"The two hundred some victims, the three deaths. Do you know there were 17 people who lost their limbs? God forbid, that we don't have a church or synagogue hit in this state," Watkins said.

Watkins talked about how one of his death row inmates, serial killer Stanley Adams, recently had seen his execution delayed once again. Adams was scheduled to die on Feb. 19, 2025, but now faces a February 18, 2028, date.

Watkins also stated that the necessary drugs should be secured to get the executions carried out. He emphasized that then Gov Ted Strickland was able to obtain a lethal injection drug. In fact, on Dec. 8, 2009, Kenneth Biros became the nation's first single drug execution.

"The victim's mother in that case, Mary Jane Heiss, was dying, but the governor (Strickland) got the job done so that she could see justice."

Watkins said he hopes other victims of heinous crimes will see the same results.

"He (Adams) is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, of heinous crimes against women and children. I have not seen, one time, the Innocent Project come in."

Adams had exhausted all his appeals and is ready to be executed, instead of being one of the objects of Gov. Mike DeWine's moratorium on executions because of the lack of lethal drugs available.

Public safety should not be disregarded, Watkins said in pointing out some of the victims in his Trumbull County death cases. He talked about a woman in her 80s who is waiting for justice in the brutal death of her 12-year-old son almost 40 years ago.

"Even if our quest does not end, Miriam Fife lives to see justice, and she still has a smile on her face... she realizes the journey is more important than the result," Watkins said.

Because of delays, the execution of Raymond Fife's killer, Danny Lee Hill, has been pushed back to July 22, 2026.

“Miriam Fife has told me, ‘I guess I will now have to live until 2026,’ ” Watkins said.

Lastly, Watkins told the panel that any effort to repeal the death penalty law should be put on the ballot.

“I don’t believe that the citizens of Ohio should not have that big stick in its arsenal unless the people vote on it,” Watkins said.

Cuyahoga County Assistant Prosecutor Saleh Awadallah, who prosecutes death penalty cases in Cuyahoga County for Prosecuting Attorney Michael O’Malley, also testified to the panel. Awadallah gave a list of the worst of the worst offenders in one of the largest Ohio counties, including one who had strangled 11 women and disposed of their bodies.

“Those folks should face a jury or three-judge panel who would have the opportunity to weigh the factors, and deserve the ultimate punishment,” Awadallah said.

For more information, contact Guy M. Vogrin, public information officer/investigator for the Trumbull County Prosecutor’s Office at 330-675-2485.