

TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Dennis Watkins, Prosecutor

Repeat Violent Offenders newsletter

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AND PAROLE UPDATE: October 6, 2025¹

Three executions take place, military execution on table

Florida executed its 13th death row inmate this year on Tuesday, Sept. 29, while two executions took place last week in Alabama and Texas. So far in 2025, there have been 34 executions in the United States:

- An Arizona man, Cleophus Cooksey Jr., was convicted Thursday, Oct. 2 on eight murder charges for a string of fatal shootings in late 2017 that targeted random victims and his own mother and stepfather. (sentencing on Monday, Oct. 6) The killings started four months after Cooksey was released from prison on a manslaughter conviction for his part in a 2001 strip club robbery in which an accomplice was fatally shot.
- Victor Tony Jones, 64, was pronounced dead by lethal injection at 6:13 p.m. Tuesday at Florida State Prison near Starke, according to the office of Gov. Ron DeSantis. In 1993, a jury convicted Jones of two counts of first-degree murder and two counts of armed robbery, sentencing him to death. Jones had recently started working at a Miami-Dade business owned by Matilda and Jacob Nestor when, in December 1990, he stabbed Matilda in the neck and Jacob in the chest during a robbery. Jones' execution surpassed Florida's annual record for executions.
- At the Texas State Penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas, death row inmate Blaine Milam was executed by lethal injection on Thursday, September 25, 2025, for the 2008 killing of his then-fiancée's 13-month-old daughter. Milam was pronounced dead at 6:40 p.m. In 2008, Milam and the girl's mother, Jesseca Carson, called police to their home near Tatum, Texas, where authorities found 13-month-old Amora Carson dead, with human bite marks on her body and signs of physical and sexual assault, according to court documents. In 2010, Milam was convicted of capital murder by a Montgomery County jury in the beating and torturing death of the infant.

¹ Last execution in Ohio was on July 18, 2018, when Robert Van Hook died by lethal injection. Death row inmates from Trumbull County, Stanley Adams and Danny Lee Hill, have execution dates set. Adams on Feb. 16, 2028, and Hill on July 22, 2026.

- Just 18 minutes before Milam died, Alabama executed Geoffrey Todd West, 50, at the William C. Holman Correctional Facility in south Alabama. West was given nitrogen oxide and pronounced dead at 6:22 p.m. Central Time. West was convicted of capital murder by a jury for the 1997 shooting death of Margaret Parrish Berry, 33. Berry, the mother of two sons, was shot while lying on the floor behind the counter at Harold's Chevron in Etowah County on March 28, 1997. Prosecutors said the store clerk was killed to ensure there was no witness left behind in the robbery in which \$250 was taken from a cookie can.
- Meanwhile, the Pentagon is preparing to ask President Donald Trump to authorize the execution of Nidal Hasan, the former Army major convicted of carrying out the 2009 mass shooting at Fort Hood in Texas. If approved, it would be the first U.S. military execution in more than six decades. The last military execution occurred on April 13, 1961 (ordered by President John F. Kennedy) when John Arthur Bennett was executed in Salzburg, Austria. Hasan, a former Army psychiatrist, killed 13 people and wounded 32 others in the attack. Hasan entered Fort Hood's Soldier Readiness Center armed with a semi-automatic pistol and opened fire on fellow service members preparing for deployment. He was convicted and sentenced to death during a military trial in 2013.
- Other states, including ones where Democrats hold some power, are moving toward reviving the death penalty to enforce the will of the people and joining a record number of states resuming enforcement of capital punishment in the past 10 years. However, here and there in the country, death penalty opponents of both political parties are using their powers to obstruct the process. In North Carolina, for example, Iryna's Law was passed but has remained unsigned on the desk of first-term Democratic Gov. Josh Stein. The legislation, passed 28-8 in the Senate and 81-31 in the House, removes judicial hurdle that have led to an "unwritten moratorium" on the death penalty since 2006. The new law would also stop cashless bail and make it more difficult for repeat offenders to get out of jail. Eleven Democratic senators in North Carolina opted for excused absences rather than courageously vote on Iryna's Law, which was passed by the majority Republicans. In the

House, 17 Democrats favored the bill and joined with Republicans to pass the legislation. The law was named after Iryna Zarutska, 23, who was slain while on a light rail train Aug. 22 in Charlotte. The accused assailant is a 15-time offender who was released by a magistrate prior to the slaying.

The Trumbull County Prosecutor's Office, headed by Prosecuting Attorney Dennis Watkins, is encouraged by these developments, and Watkins notes he has testified on behalf of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association -- with its Executive Director Lou Tobin -- before a Senate committee hoping that President Trump will soon resume executions of the Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue murderer Robert Bowers and South Carolina church shooter Dylann Roof, and that Ohio will follow sometime soon and enforce the death penalty decisions of judges and jurors on a case-by-case basis.

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