

Ohioans to Stop Executions

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Policy Issue Resources

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[Hannah Kubbins](#) / November 1, 2016

In the wake of court filings seeking a new trial in the case of Kevin Keith, a man sentenced to death in 1994, Ohioans to Stop Executions calls on Governor John Kasich and Attorney General Mike DeWine to halt executions and conduct an independent investigation to ensure no additional miscarriages of justice go unabated. Kevin Keith was days away from being executed in 2010 when then-Governor Ted Strickland commuted his sentence to life in prison with no possibility of parole, citing too many real and unanswered questions pertaining to his guilt.

Obviously Kevin Keith's conviction was impacted by suspect forensic analysis. We know this now, said Melinda Dawson, Chair of the Board of Directors of Ohioans to Stop Executions. The bigger question is how many more innocent people are on death row or in prison today as a result of flawed forensic work? The reliability of Ohio's criminal justice system is completely undermined. We need answers.

In an [exclusive article](#) published Sunday, The Columbus Dispatch raised questions about a forensic scientist at the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI). Records show that BCI supervisors had concerns about an employee who worked on an untold number of criminal investigations, likely numbering hundreds. According to documents (see exhibits [here](#) and motions are attached) filed by Kevin Keith's legal team on Friday, Her findings and conclusions regarding evidence may be suspect. She will stretch the truth to satisfy a department.

Kevin Keith's death penalty case is one instance where the former BCI employee appears to have stretched the truth regarding tire mark evidence and a partial license plate imprint left on a snow embankment. The result was an innocent man was sentenced to death. Another man wrongfully convicted due to flawed forensic analysis by the now-former BCI employee has already been released.

If the state had its way, Kevin would be dead today, said Charles Keith, brother of Kevin Keith and a member of the board of directors of Ohioans to Stop Executions. Governor Strickland could have simply accepted the unanimous recommendation of the Parole Board to go ahead and kill my brother. I thank God he kept Kevin alive so that we could reach this day. Now what Kevin and my family and I have been saying for more than twenty years is finally being heard by others. Kevin is innocent, and we look forward to having him home. Many questions remain. How could this be allowed to happen? How many others are there? How many Ohioans been executed while the BCI failed to sufficiently supervise its employees?

Ohioans to Stop Executions shares the concerns of former attorneys general Lee Fisher and Jim Petro. OTSE calls on Governor Kasich to halt all scheduled executions pending an independent investigation to ensure that no death penalty case moves forward where evidence used to convict that individual was processed by Ohio's BCI.

This is yet another example of just how broken the death penalty is in Ohio, said Dawson. Ohioans who want to have executions also want to be certain that we are killing the person who is actually guilty of the crime.

OTSE again calls on the Ohio General Assembly to implement the reform recommendations of the Supreme Court Joint Task Force on the Administration of Ohio's Death Penalty. [13 of those 56](#) recommendations would help prevent wrongful convictions and executions. Those recommendations were released in 2014. To-date, none of them have had a hearing at the legislature.

Ohioans to Stop Executions understands that the investigative reporting team at the Columbus Dispatch has more stories in the works. We urge other journalists to also look at this situation. We will be watching the developments in this situation and will comment further as appropriate. Kevin Keith's motions seeking a new trial are attached. Exhibits in the filing are available [here](#).

[Attachment 1: Motion for New Trial Based on New Evidence](#)

[Attachment 2: Motion for Leave to File Delayed Motion for New Trial](#)

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