

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/continuing-executions-undermine-death-penalty-review-says-aclu>

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LUCASVILLE, OH - The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio renewed its call for state officials to halt all executions while a commission created by the Ohio Supreme Court reviews the death penalty system. The state executed Reginald Brooks today, who was the first person to be executed in nearly six months after a federal judge questioned the states lethal injection protocols. The death penalty commission met for the first time in October 2011, and will examine issues of fairness, due process, and racial disparity within the states death penalty system.

State officials showed courage when they decided to take a serious look at the severe problems plaguing Ohios death penalty system, said ACLU of Ohio Executive Director Christine Link. There is no sense to continuing executions while these important questions are being addressed. In the interest of fairness and justice for all the condemned, we cannot continue to use a fatally flawed system.

Previous studies conducted by the Associated Press and American Bar Association have raised serious questions regarding how the death penalty is applied in Ohio. Both studies found disparities in death penalty sentences based on the race of the victim and offender, economic class, and geography of where the crime occurred. The ABA study also noted significant concerns with the quality of defense many defendants receive in capital punishment cases.

The death penalty cannot be reversed. If state officials have even the smallest doubt that the system is unfair or unjust, they must not continue executions, concluded Link. If the state insists on imposing the death penalty, we must have confidence that the system works. The death penalty commission is exploring the very issues that have left many in the state doubting the systems infallibility. By continuing to impose capital punishment, officials undermine the important work done by the commission.

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