

Ohioans to Stop Executions

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://otse.org/ohio-troubled-death-penalty-system-yet-intends-resume-executions-anyway/>

Policy Issue Resources

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[Hannah Kubbins](#) / July 21, 2017

It's been more than three years since Ohio last executed a convicted killer. Unfortunately, the state is poised to resume the barbaric practice next week despite serious questions over respect for constitutional protections and the basic fairness of how the state administers the capital punishment system itself.

Capital punishment had been halted in the wake of a botched execution. In early 2014, the state had converted to a new, untested two-drug lethal injection protocol: the sedative midazolam followed by hydromorphone, a painkiller because it no longer could find suppliers for pentobarbital or sodium thiopental, the more powerful barbiturates it previously used in both single- and three-drug protocols.

Critics warned that midazolam wouldn't sedate inmate Dennis McGuire sufficiently, and, indeed, [witnesses reported](#) that McGuire snorted, gasped and struggled during a [procedure](#) that [dragged on](#) for 26 minutes, more than 10 minutes longer than lethal-injection executions usually take. (Midazolam does not have the same anesthetic effect as a barbiturate; an expert in pharmacology and toxicology offers a good overview of execution drugs [here](#).)

That grotesque killing led the state and, later, a federal judge to halt executions until officials could figure out what went wrong, and how to fix it.

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