

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/death-secrecy>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Ohio's death penalty has had a long and sordid history. Just look at the past decade: [Four](#) botched executions. [Ten people](#) granted clemency by the governor. Fifty-six recommendations from an Ohio Supreme Court taskforce of experts to revamp our broken system. With botched executions and growing controversy around lethal injections in Arizona, Oklahoma, and elsewhere, [a federal judge in Ohio rightfully paused executions](#) until the state could adopt new protocols. Given all of these problems, the most recent move from Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is downright confounding. What is his solution to Ohio's execution problems? Close the curtain and keep the public out. The attorney general announced [during a press interview](#) that he was pursuing legislation that would block the public's access to what compounding pharmacy manufactures drugs for lethal injections and the identities of medical personnel who assist in executions. He also wants to provide immunity for those individuals from professional or ethical reprimands for their participation. No matter what your position is on the death penalty, it is important to understand that this level of secrecy will be detrimental for Ohio. The government represents the people and should be accountable to us. We have laws that require government officials to provide public records and have open meetings in order to prevent corruption, abuse, and incompetence. Taking a person's life is the ultimate punishment that the public can dole out, which means we have to take even greater pains to ensure the government does it humanely and legally. Allowing anonymity for drug manufacturers is particularly problematic. Ohio would like to use compounding pharmacies, which are totally unregulated by the Food and Drug Administration for safety and efficacy. Compounding pharmacies make small batches of drugs, with each one being unique. This means that some batches might be more potent than another, and some might be contaminated. Only a few years ago, dozens of people in the United States died from a contaminated batch of steroids produced by a compounding pharmacy. And now Attorney General DeWine wants to introduce more secrecy and less accountability to this situation? Unfortunately, secrecy is the typical reaction of the government in any number of circumstances when problems crop up, they want to hide the truth from the people.

Read more about the failures of the death penalty in Ohio on our [Death Penalty issue page](#). Listen to the podcast, [The Civil Liberties Minute: Secret Executions in America](#).

Ohio has had its share of problems with lethal injections. Secrecy will only guarantee that those problems will continue. Whether you are a supporter or opponent of the death penalty, we all must agree that the government should play by the rules and must be accountable to us. What is needed here is more accountability, not less. If we are to have a death penalty, the public, courts, and condemned prisoners must all understand how executions are to be carried out and that they will comply with our laws. Anything less only violates the public's trust and our Constitution.

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