



Abolishing the Death Penalty in Oklahoma Would Protect Justice

Since 1981, 10 people in Oklahoma have been exonerated while on death row awaiting execution.

A wrongful conviction is perhaps the worst possible outcome in the criminal justice system—and it is made unthinkable worse when the result of a wrongful conviction is execution by the government. Even one wrongful conviction resulting in the death of an innocent person should be considered intolerable. Unfortunately, wrongful convictions occur in death penalty cases at an alarming rate. Since 1981, 10 people in Oklahoma have been exonerated while on death row awaiting execution.

The Death Penalty Information Center maintains a database of death row exonerations in the United States. The database only includes cases where individuals were acquitted of all charges, had all their charges dismissed, or received a complete pardon based on evidence of their innocence. It provides very conservative estimates and likely understates the true number of innocent people who have been sentenced to death in America.

Death Row Exonerations Nationwide

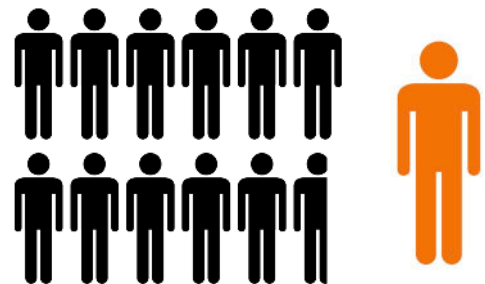
- Since 1972, over 185 Americans have been exonerated while awaiting executions on death row.
- 68% of exonerations involved perjury or false accusations.
- 69% of exonerations involved misconduct by officials.

Death Row Exonerations in Oklahoma

- Since 1981, 10 individuals have been exonerated while on death row awaiting execution in Oklahoma.
- Six of those cases involved perjury or false accusations.
- Seven cases involved official misconduct.
- Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, has had the 4th highest number of death row exonerations among all counties in the US. Four of the five death row exonerations in Oklahoma County involved misconduct by officials.

In Oklahoma, for every

11.7 executions



1 innocent person
on death row has been exonerated

10
YEARS

On average, exonerees in Oklahoma had been on death row for 10 years.

The longest sentence served by a death row exoneree was 21 years.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY CONTACT

- Vittorio Nastasi, Director of Criminal Justice Policy (Vittorio.Nastasi@reason.org)

Reason Foundation is a national 501(c)(3) public policy research and education organization with expertise across a range of policy areas, including public sector pensions, transportation, infrastructure, education, and criminal justice. For more information about Reason Foundation, visit reason.org





Abolishing the Death Penalty in Oklahoma Would Protect Taxpayers

While the moral issue of the state executing citizens (especially considering wrongful convictions) is the most significant reason to abolish the death penalty, it should also be abolished because it is significantly more expensive than alternative sentences, such as life without parole. Capital cases cost Oklahoma taxpayers millions of dollars more than other forms of sentencing. Oklahoma's last execution was in August 2022.

Recent Studies on the High Costs of Death Penalty Cases

- A 2017 analysis of capital punishment costs found that, on average, cases where prosecutors seek the death penalty cost \$700,000 more than in comparable non-capital murder cases.
- A 2016 cost analysis of death penalty cases in Oregon found that costs for aggravated murder cases resulting in death sentences cost between \$800,000 and \$1,000,000 more than similar aggravated murder cases where the death penalty was not pursued.
- A 2015 fiscal analysis in Indiana found that murder cases involving the death penalty were more than 4.5 times more expensive than murder cases where prosecutors sought life without parole.

Death penalty cases are

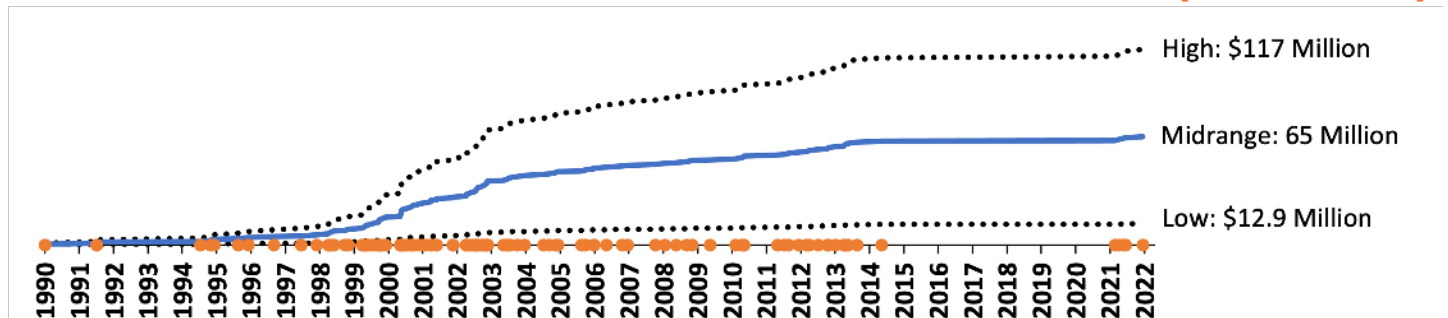
4.5X

more expensive than comparable cases where prosecutors sought life without parole.

Costs of the Death Penalty in Oklahoma

- A study prepared for the Oklahoma Death Penalty Review Commission found that Oklahoma spends \$110,000 more on capital cases than comparable non-capital cases. The study authors noted that this is a very conservative estimate because many prosecution and court costs were excluded.
- Even at that conservative rate, with 42 individuals currently on death row, Oklahoma could have saved \$4.64 million by trying the cases as life without parole cases rather than seeking the death penalty.
- Using estimates from other studies suggests Oklahoma could've saved between \$33.6 million and \$42 million by pursuing life without the possibility of parole rather than the death penalty.
- Moreover, the 117 executions conducted in Oklahoma since 1990 are estimated to have cost the state between \$12.9 million and \$117 million.

Estimated Cumulative Cost of Executions in Oklahoma (1990-2022)



CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY CONTACT

- Vittorio Nastasi, Director of Criminal Justice Policy (Vittorio.Nastasi@reason.org)

Reason Foundation is a national 501(c)(3) public policy research and education organization with expertise across a range of policy areas, including public sector pensions, transportation, infrastructure, education, and criminal justice. For more information about Reason Foundation, visit reason.org

