IMPORTANT DEATH PENALTY DATES AND INFORMATION

National Dates, Cases, and Facts
Source Death Penalty Information Center
https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/part-i-history-death-penalty#america

Timeline

Eighteenth Century B.C. - first established death penalty laws.

Eleventh Century A.D. - William the Conqueror will not allow persons to be hanged except in cases of murder.

1608 - Captain George Kendall becomes the first recorded execution in the new colonies.

1632 - Jane Champion becomes the first woman executed in the new colonies.

1767 - Cesare Beccaria's essay, On Crimes and Punishment, theorizes that there is no justification for the state to take a life.

Late 1700s - United States abolitionist movement begins.

Early 1800s - Many states reduce their number of capital crimes and build state penitentiaries.

1823-1837 - Over 100 of the 222 crimes punishable by death in Britain are eliminated.

1834 - Pennsylvania becomes the first state to move executions into correctional facilities.

1838 - Discretionary death penalty statutes enacted in Tennessee.

1847 - Michigan becomes the first state to abolish the death penalty for all crimes except treason.

1890- William Kemmler becomes first person executed by electrocution.

Early 1900s - Beginning of the "Progressive Period" of reform in the United States.

1907-1917 - Nine states abolish the death penalty for all crimes or strictly limit it.

1920s - 1940s - American abolition movement loses support.

1924 - The use of cyanide gas introduced as an execution method

1930s - Executions reach the highest levels in American history - average 167 per year.

1948 - The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaiming a "right to life."

1950-1980 - De facto abolition becomes the norm in western Europe.

1958 - *Trop v. Dulles*. Eighth Amendment's meaning contained an "evolving standard of decency that marked the progress of a maturing society."

1966 - Support of capital punishment reaches all-time low. A Gallup poll shows support of the death penalty at only 42%.

1968 - *Witherspoon v. Illinois*. Dismissing potential jurors solely because they express opposition to the death penalty held unconstitutional.

1970 - *Crampton v. Ohio* and *McGautha v. California*. The Supreme Court approves of unfettered jury discretion and non-bifurcated trials.

June 1972 - *Furman v. Georgia*. Supreme Court effectively voids 40 death penalty statutes and suspends the death penalty finding its application among states was not suitably directed and limited so as to minimize the risk of wholly arbitrary and capricious action.

1976 - *Gregg v. Georgia*. Guided discretion statutes approved and death penalty reinstated; Court approves Georgia's bifurcated system that contained specific aggravating factors and mitigating circumstances for juries to consider, provided "clear and objective standards" and gave adequate guidance to the sentencing authority. The Court articulates the "evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society."

1976- *Woodson v. North Carolina*. Court strikes down mandatory statute finding the extreme nature of the punishment of death requires that a sentence consider the defendant as a unique human being. Evolving standards of decency under the Eight Amendment require consideration of the character and record of the individual offender and the circumstances of the particular offense.

January 17, 1977 - Ten-year moratorium on executions ends with the execution of Gary Gilmore by firing squad in Utah.

1977 - Oklahoma becomes the first state to adopt lethal injection as a means of execution.

1977 - *Coker v. Georgia*. Held death penalty is an unconstitutional punishment for rape of an adult woman when the victim is not killed.

1978 -*Locket v. Ohio* -Eight Amendment requires the sentence not be precluded from considering, *as a mitigating factor*, any aspect of a defendant's character or record any of the circumstances of the offense that the defendant proffers as a basis for a sentence less than death.

1980 *Godfrey v. Georgia* -vague application of an aggravating circumstance struck down. A capital sentencing scheme must provide a meaningful basis for distinguishing the few cases in which the death penalty is imposed from the many cases in which it is not.

1982- *Eddings v. Oklahoma.* The sentence cannot refuse to consider, as a matter of law, any relevant mitigating evidence. In this case the 16 year old defendant presented mitigating evidence of a troubled and abusive upbringing, mental and emotional level were several years below his chronological age, and he had been deprived of care and attention and suffered from serious emotional problems.

December 7, 1982 - Charles Brooks becomes the first person executed by lethal injection.

1984 - Velma Barfield becomes the first woman executed since reinstatement of the death penalty.

1986 - *Ford v. Wainwright.* .Execution of insane persons banned.

1986 - *Batson v. Kentucky*. Prosecutor who strikes a disproportionate number of citizens of the same race in selecting a jury is required to rebut the inference of discrimination by showing neutral reasons for his or her strikes.

1987 - *McCleskey v. Kemp*. Racial disparities not recognized as a constitutional violation of "equal protection of the law" unless intentional racial discrimination against the defendant can be shown.

1988 - *Thompson v. Oklahoma.* .Executions of offenders age fifteen and younger at the time of their crimes is unconstitutional.

1989 - *Stanford v. Kentucky*, and *Wilkins v. Missouri.* Eighth Amendment does not prohibit the death penalty for crimes committed at age sixteen or seventeen.

1989 - *Penry v. Lynaugh.* Executing persons with "mental retardation" is not a violation of the Eighth Amendment.

1993 - *Herrera v. Collins.* In the absence of other constitutional grounds, new evidence of innocence is no reason for federal court to order a new trial.

1994 - President Clinton signs the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act expanding the federal death penalty.

1996 - President Clinton signs the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act restricting review in federal courts.

1998 - Karla Faye Tucker and Judi Buenoano executed.

November 1998 - Northwestern University holds the first-ever National Conference on Wrongful Convictions and the Death Penalty. The Conference brings together 30 inmates who were freed from death row because of innocence.

January 1999 - Pope John Paul II visits St. Louis, Missouri, and calls for an end to the death penalty.

April 1999 - U.N. Human Rights Commission Resolution Supporting Worldwide Moratorium On Executions.

June 1999 - Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, signs a decree commuting the death sentences of all of the convicts on Russia's death row.

January 2000 - Illinois Governor George Ryan declares a Moratorium on executions and appoints a blue-ribbon Commission on Capital Punishment to study the issue.

2002 - *Ring v. Arizona.* A death sentence where the necessary aggravating factors are determined by a judge violates a defendant's constitutional right to a trial by jury.

2002 - *Atkins v. Virginia*. the execution of "mentally retarded" defendants violates the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Three conditions: 1. Subaverage intellectual functioning (low IQ score) 2) a lack of fundamental social and practical skills, and 3) the presence of both conditions before the age of 18.

January 2003 - Gov. George Ryan grants clemency to all of the remaining 167 death row inmates in Illinois because of the flawed process that led to these sentences.

June 2004 - New York's death penalty law declared unconstitutional by the state's high court.

March 2005 - In *Roper V. Simmons*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty for those who had committed their crimes under 18 years of age was cruel and unusual punishment.

December 2007 - The New Jersey General Assembly votes to become the first state to legislatively abolish capital punishment since it was re-instated in 1976.

February 2008 - The Nebraska Supreme Court rules electrocution, the sole execution method in the state, to be cruel and unusual punishment, effectively freezing all executions in the state.

June 2008 - *Kennedy v. Louisiana*. Capital punishment cannot apply to those convicted of child rape where no death occurs.

2008- *Baze v. Rees*. Kentucky's three-drug protocol for carrying out lethal injections does not amount to cruel and unusual punishment under the Eight Amendment.

March 2009 - Governor Bill Richardson signs legislation to repeal the death penalty in New Mexico, replacing it with life without parole.

March 2011 - Governor Pat Quinn signs legislation to repeal the death penalty in Illinois, replacing it with life without parole.

2014- *Hall v. Florida*- narrowed the discretion under which states can designate a convicted murderer too intellectually incapacitated to be executed. In borderline cases, the state may not rely solely on intelligence tests scores to determine eligibility for the death penalty. State must look behind IQ Scores when an inmate tests in the 70 to 75 range. The defendant's

lawyer in that case must be allowed to offer additional clinical evidence of intellectual deficit, including the inability to learn basic skills and adapt to changing circumstances.

June 29, 2015. *Glossip v. Gross*. Court ruled the anti-anxiety medication midazolam is constitutional for use as the first drug in a three-drug lethal injection formula and rejected prisoners' claim that the method of execution used by Oklahoma created an unacceptable risk of severe pain and violates the Eight Amendment. Prisoners failed to identify a known and available alternative method of execution that entails a lesser risk of pain. The district court did not commit clear error when it found that the prisoners failed to establish that Oklahoma's use of massive dose of midazolam in its execution protocol entails a substantial risk of severe pain.