



Fact Sheet on the Death Penalty in Missouri

May 18, 2016

History: The Death Penalty was re-instated in Missouri in 1977, with Life Without Parole as the alternative sentence for Capital Murder. In 1988, the General Assembly approved Lethal Injection to be the method for execution, although retaining gas as a method on the books. In 1990, Missouri moved its death row to the Potosi prison, housing those with death sentences in general population until the setting of their execution date. In order to reduce resulting morale problems with the Potosi staff, Missouri moved its execution chamber to the Bonne Terre prison in 2005. In March 2015, the execution time changed from 12:01 a.m., one minute after midnight, to 6:00 pm.

The first execution after re-instatement was in 1989, George Mercer. Since that time there have been **87** executions, ranking Missouri 5th in the nation for total executions, behind Texas, Virginia, Oklahoma and Florida. For 2015, Missouri assumed the position of the number one executioner in the country, on a per capita basis. The last execution was Earl Forrest on May 11, 2016. Among the executed, there have been 5 individuals who gave up their appeals and 1 who was a juvenile under the age of 18 at the time of his crime. Of those executed, **68 (78%)** were for murdering white victims and **19 (22%)** were for murdering African-American victims.

Currently, there are 26 men with death sentences in Missouri: African-American 9 (35%), White 17 (65%). Twenty-two had Public Defenders, 3 had appointed counsel, and 1 had a private attorney.

Fairness and Accuracy: There have been four exonerations of persons who received the death sentence after all their appeals had been exhausted: Joe Amrine, Dick Dexter, Eric Clemmons and Reginald Griffin.

In 2012, the American Bar Association Death Penalty Due Process Review Project issued its Assessment Report of Missouri and stated that Missouri was significantly out of compliance with their standards for fairness and accuracy.

Geography: St. Louis County is ranked #9 among all the counties in the nation in executions with at least 13 according to the Death Penalty Information Center [2013].

Public Opinion: A poll of Missourians' opinions about the death penalty, taken by the Center for Social Sciences and Public Policy Research, Southwest Missouri State University, was released in June 2004. The results include:

- 60% expressed a willingness to support a three-year moratorium on executions to investigate sentencing practices and effects
- 81% said it would either not affect their vote or make them more likely to vote for a legislator who voted for a moratorium; only 11% said they would be less likely to vote for that legislator
- Only 40% support the death penalty when offered an option of life with no parole plus restitution

For more information see www.madpmo.org or www.deathpenaltyinfo.org