

DEATH PENALTY TIMELINE

1972

- June 29: *Furman v. Georgia*. Supreme Court effectively voids 40 death penalty statutes and suspends the death penalty.

1976

- July 2: *Gregg v. Georgia*. Supreme Court approves guided discretion statutes. Death penalty reinstated.

1977

- January 17: Ten-year moratorium on executions ends with the execution of Gary Gilmore by firing squad in Utah.
- Oklahoma becomes the first state to adopt lethal injection as a means of execution.
- *Coker v. Georgia*. Supreme Court rules that death penalty is unconstitutional for rape of an adult woman when the victim is not killed.

1982

- December 7: Charles Brooks in Texas becomes the first person executed by lethal injection.

1984

- Velma Barfield in North Carolina becomes the first woman executed since reinstatement of the death penalty.

1986

- *Ford v. Wainwright*. Supreme Court bans execution of insane persons.
- *Batson v. Kentucky*. Supreme Court rules that a 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 the strikes.

1987

- *McCleskey v. Kemp*. Supreme Court holds that racial disparities are not a constitutional violation of "equal protection of the law" unless intentional racial discrimination against the defendant can be shown.

1988

- *Thompson v. Oklahoma*. Supreme Court holds that executions of offenders aged fifteen and younger at the time of their crimes is unconstitutional.

1989

- *Stanford v. Kentucky* and *Wilkins v. Missouri*. Supreme Court rules that Eighth Amendment does not prohibit the death penalty for crimes committed at age sixteen or seventeen.
- *Penry v. Lynaugh*. Supreme Court rules that executing persons with mental retardation is not a violation of the Eighth Amendment.

1993

- Kirk Bloodsworth of Maryland becomes the first person to be freed from the death row on the basis of DNA evidence.
- *Herrera v. Collins*. In the absence of other constitutional violations, the Supreme Court rules that new evidence of innocence is ordinarily insufficient grounds for federal court to order a new trial.

1994

- Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act passed, expanding the federal death penalty.

1996

- Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act passed, restricting review in federal courts.

1997

- American Bar Association calls for a national moratorium on executions.

1998

- Karla Faye Tucker is executed in Texas.
- November: Northwestern University holds National Conference on Wrongful Convictions and the Death Penalty. The Conference brings together many inmates who were freed from death row because of innocence.

1999

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

2000

- January: 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*. The Supreme Court finds that a death sentence where the necessary aggravating factors must be determined by a judge violates a defendant's constitutional right to a trial by jury.
- *Atkins v. Virginia*. The Supreme Court rules that the execution of mentally retarded defendants violates the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment.
- Maryland Governor Parris Glendening declares a moratorium on executions in the state while a racial bias study is conducted.

2003

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

2004

- Death penalty laws in New York and Kansas are declared unconstitutional by the states' highest courts.

2005

- *Roper v. Simmons*. The Supreme Court finds that the execution of those under the age of 18 at the time of their crime violates the Eighth Amendment.

2006

- New Jersey legislature institutes a moratorium on executions.
- July 2: 30th Anniversary of *Gregg v. Georgia*