

Ohio sets new execution date for 69-year-old inmate

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The execution of Alva Campbell Jr., a frail, sickly 69-year-old death row inmate, was called off by Ohio prison officials on Wednesday after prison staff were unable to locate a vein to inject the lethal chemicals intended to kill him. A new execution date for Campbell was immediately set by Ohio Governor John Kasich.

Campbell was convicted and sentenced to die for the 1997 carjacking death of Charles Dials, 18. Campbell's execution-gone-wrong inside the death chamber at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville casts a grim light on all that is repugnant about capital punishment and the way it is still practiced in 21st century America.

At about 10:57 a.m., according to the *Columbus Dispatch*, Campbell was wheeled into the chamber, unable to walk in unassisted. He uses a walker, relies on a colostomy bag and requires breathing treatments four times a day as a result of a long-time cigarette habit.

In an act of contempt disguised as sympathy, prison officials had provided him with a wedge pillow on the gurney to help him breathe until the lifeblood was to be sucked out of him. The execution, however, was unable to proceed after staff failed to find suitable veins for the lethal injection. According to prison authorities, two veins are required.

Members of the execution team first worked on both of Campbell's arms for about 30 minutes while he was on the gurney. The team used an ultraviolet light to probe his arms and stuck him once in each arm. They then tried his left leg below the knee, before giving up. According to the *Dispatch*, Campbell threw his head back and appeared to cry out in pain.

Throughout the prodding, the execution team members periodically patted him on the arm and

shoulder in a perverse effort to comfort him, according to witnesses. Gary Mohr, head of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, called off the execution.

According to the condemned man's attorney, David Stebbins, as reported by the *Guardian*, Campbell shook hands with execution team members and wiped away tears after being informed the execution was being called off. "This is a day I'll never forget," Campbell said, according to Stebbins.

The Ohio Parole Board said in October that it did not support clemency for Campbell. The US Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to stop the execution. And last week, Governor Kasich denied Campbell's request for clemency. The governor was quick to reschedule Campbell's execution for June 5, 2019.

It is highly questionable whether Campbell will live another year and a half and it is unlikely that his veins will be in any better shape than they are now. Campbell's attorneys have argued that he is too ill to be executed and that he should also be given a reprieve due to the effects of a brutal childhood, in which he was beaten, sexually abused and tortured.

Campbell's date with death had already been rescheduled several times due to court orders and because of problems with Ohio's execution protocol. It had been moved from May 10 this year to September 13, and then to November 15.

The execution of another Ohio death row inmate, Romell Broom, was called off in September 2009 after prison staff made 18 unsuccessful attempts over two hours to insert an IV. He remains on death row and his execution has been rescheduled for June 17, 2020.

Ohio executions were put on hold in 2014 after inmate Dennis McGuire appeared to choke and struggle for more than 15 minutes. Family members watched as

McGuire writhed in pain before being pronounced dead 25 minutes later by prison authorities.

Ohio executions were resumed after a three-year hiatus with the execution of Ronald Phillips, after the US Supreme Court rejected his request for a stay. The second execution of the year was on September 13, when Gary Otte was put to death. Otte's attorney said that he appeared to be in pain during the procedure and that moments after he was injected with the sedative midazolam his stomach was moving up and down abnormally.

Eager to make up for time lost in the death chamber, Ohio authorities have a staggering 53 executions scheduled between now and April 2022: 16 in 2018, 13 in 2019, 14 in 2020, 8 in 2021, and 2 in 2022.



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