

The bloody record: Florida executes Frank Walls amid 2025's unprecedented US killing spree

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At 6:11 p.m. on December 18, 2025, the state of Florida concluded its deadliest year in modern history by putting to death Frank Athen Walls. Inside the execution chamber at Florida State Prison near Starke, Walls, 58, was strapped to a gurney and administered a three-drug lethal injection consisting of a sedative, a paralytic, and a drug to stop the heart.

Before the chemicals began to flow, Walls offered a final apology to the families of his victims, stating, “I am sorry for all of the things I did, the pain I caused, and all of that you have suffered all these years.”

Walls’ path to the executioner began in the mid-1980s with a series of brutal attacks in the Florida Panhandle that investigators dubbed the “Tuesday murders” because the victims were typically killed on a Tuesday or before dawn on Wednesday.

In July 1987, Walls broke into the mobile home of Edward Alger, an Air Force airman, and his girlfriend, Ann Peterson. After binding the couple, Walls slit Alger’s throat and shot him in the head when Alger managed to break free and fight back. He then turned his weapon on Peterson, shooting her twice in the head. Walls was apprehended after his roommate alerted police to his erratic behavior; a search of his home revealed items stolen from the crime scene.

Following his conviction, DNA evidence and confessions linked Walls to three additional killings: the 1985 murder of Tommie Lou Whiddon, who was sunbathing when Walls slit her throat; the 1986 stabbing of Cynthia Sue Condra; and the 1987 rape and murder of Audrey Gygi.

A lifetime of cognitive failure

The execution of Frank Walls is an indictment of a legal system that ignores clear evidence of intellectual disability as a mitigating factor. Walls was hypoxic (deprived of oxygen) at birth and suffered from high fevers and meningitis as a toddler and teenager, leading to documented brain damage. By age five, he struggled with severe impulse control and focus. As an adult, he recorded IQ scores in the low 70s (consistently 72, 73 and 74), placing him in the intellectually disabled range.

Despite a 2002 Supreme Court ruling prohibiting the execution of the intellectually disabled, Florida courts utilized a rigid interpretation of these standards to uphold his sentence. Advocates noted that during his 37 years in prison, Walls found solace in his Catholic faith and became a Benedictine Oblate in the confines of death row.

Walls’ legal journey was a decades-long cycle of convictions and reversals. Initially sentenced to death in 1988, his conviction was overturned by the Florida Supreme Court due to issues with his competency hearing. He was re-convicted and re-sentenced to death in 1992.

In the days leading up to his death, Walls’ attorneys filed a last-minute lawsuit alleging that the Florida Department of Corrections was using expired drugs and incomplete doses in its 2025 executions, raising the risk of a “needlessly cruel death” in which the prisoner might choke on his own blood. The US Supreme Court denied his final request for a stay on the afternoon of the execution.

Florida as execution leader

The execution of Frank Walls was the 19th in Florida in 2025, shattering the state's previous record of eight set in 2014. This surge was driven by Governor Ron DeSantis' "justice delayed is justice denied" policy, which targeted inmates who had spent decades in the appellate system. DeSantis' aggressive approach was bolstered by 2023 legislation—the "Parkland Law," after the school shooting of the same name—which allowed for death sentences with a non-unanimous 8-4 jury recommendation, the lowest threshold in the nation.

This state-level killing spree reflects a broader national trend influenced by President Donald Trump's return to office. Trump's vocal support for capital punishment and his administration's resumption of federal executions created a political climate that encouraged high-use states to accelerate their protocols. Nationally, the US saw 48 executions in 2025, a 15-year high, with Florida alone accounting for approximately 40 percent of that total.

The following individuals were put to death by the state of Florida during this record-breaking year:

- James Ford (February 14): Convicted of a 1997 double murder; executed despite claims of significant childhood trauma.
- Edward James (March 20): A US Army veteran who murdered a child and her grandmother in 1993 while under extreme mental disturbance from drug use.
- Michael Tanzi (April 8): Convicted of a 2000 murder; his case challenged the practice of judges, rather than juries, determining death sentences.
- Jeffrey Hutchinson (May 1): A Gulf War Army Ranger who killed his girlfriend and her children; his defense argued PTSD and traumatic brain injury.
- Glen Rogers (May 15): Convicted of a high-profile murder in Hillsborough County.
- Anthony Wainwright (June 10): Executed for a 1994 rape and murder; claimed prenatal exposure to Agent Orange caused cognitive impairment.
- Thomas Gudinas (June 24): Put to death after a failed challenge to the governor's selection process.

- Michael Bernard Bell (July 15): Convicted of a 1993 double murder; a survivor of the abusive Dozier School for Boys.

- Edward Zakrzewski (July 31): An Air Force veteran who killed his family in 1994; sentenced by a non-unanimous 7-5 jury.

- Kayle Bates (August 19): A National Guard veteran deployed during the 1980 Miami riots; convicted of a 1982 murder.

- Curtis Windom (August 28): Executed for a 1992 triple murder; his own daughter, a victim's child, advocated for his life.

- David Pittman (September 17): Executed despite documented cognitive deficits and an IQ in the low 70s.

- Victor Jones (September 30): Another Dozier School survivor executed just months after the state authorized compensation for school victims.

- Samuel Smithers (October 14): Put to death for murders committed in the late 1990s.

- Norman Mearle Grim, Jr. (October 28): A Navy veteran and "execution volunteer" who waived his appeals while lacking active counsel.

- Bryan Jennings (November 13): A Marine Corps veteran who spent over 40 years on death row for a 1979 crime.

- Richard Barry Randolph (November 20): An Army veteran convicted of the 1988 murder of his former manager.

- Mark Gerald (December 9): The year's final "volunteer," who waived all appeals just days after his warrant was signed.

- Frank Walls (December 18): Executed for the 1987 "Tuesday murders" despite lifelong intellectual disability.

The 2025 surge in Florida represents a grim assembly line of state power, where the gears of finality grind over the complexities of mental illness, military trauma and institutional abuse, leaving a trail of state-sanctioned death that has become the new national standard.



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