

Ignore the noise about lethal injection drugs. Arizona can and should resume executions

Opinion: Out-of-state critics say executions are unlawful because a doctor can't ethically prescribe lethal-injection drugs. That's simply wrong.

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In their recent op-ed, “Resuming lethal-injection executions is far too risky,” guest columnists from the East Coast Arthur Rizer and Camille Infantolino opine that lethal-injection executions should not be carried out in Arizona because they are both illegal and poor public policy.

The two are wrong.

The U.S. Supreme Court has consistently affirmed that the death penalty is a constitutional form of punishment and has never declared any specific execution method unconstitutional. With respect to lethal injection, it has heard several challenges to particular drug combinations in the last decade and has not concluded that any of them create an unacceptable risk of discomfort.

Supreme Court rejected that argument

Arizona currently uses a single-drug protocol of pentobarbital or sodium thiopental, both fast-acting barbiturates that produce rapid unconsciousness and death. In recent litigation, a group of death-row inmates agreed to this single-drug protocol.

Despite the fact that Arizona and numerous other states, along with the federal government, have carried out executions by lethal-injection for decades, the out-of-state columnists propose that this procedure was illegal all along because a doctor must prescribe lethal-injection drugs before they can be used, and a doctor cannot ethically do so.

Three federal inmates recently made a similar argument. But the U.S. Supreme Court did not agree, and the inmates were executed shortly thereafter.

From a policy perspective, one of the most sacred and established duties of public servants is to

provide a voice for people who are unable to effectively speak for themselves. This applies to diverse segments of our population, from young children to people with disabilities, disadvantages and declining health.

In the most solemn cases, it requires us to speak on behalf of those who have been viciously murdered and no longer have any voice at all.

No one should have to beg for justice

In Arizona, we must speak up for 8-year-old Vicki Lynne Hoskinson, who was out riding her pink bicycle in 1984 when a convicted pedophile kidnapped and killed her. We must raise our voices for 21-year-old Deana Bowdoin, an ASU student who was raped, strangled and stabbed in her Tempe apartment in 1978.

We must also stand up for the Luna family. In 1993, a person disguised as a flower delivery man forced his way into their home and assaulted, tortured and killed them one by one, including 5-year-old Damien. We must stand up for each and every victim.

I deeply sympathize with family members and support groups working to raise public awareness of beloved homicide victims. These folks should not, however, have to launch media campaigns, lobby government officials or beg anyone for justice.

It is society's responsibility to enforce our laws and respect court-ordered sentences. Jurors have done their civic duty and we must all do ours.

We must resume lawful executions

It has now been six years since Arizona carried out an execution, and the number of death-row inmates continues to increase. Today there are 21 convicted murderers who have exhausted their appeals.

The victims and their loved ones have waited far too long for justice and some extended family members have passed away without the closure or resolution that they had sought and deserved.

This is unacceptable.

I will remain committed to upholding the rule of law and opposing specious legal arguments and misguided antics designed to delay the administration of justice. I recently informed Gov. Doug Ducey that the Attorney General's Office has found a lawful supplier of pentobarbital for lethal injections, and this will have no effect on any medical care in Arizona.

The time has come to resume lawfully imposed executions. While there will always be some who oppose capital punishment, it remains the law in our state because it's what justice demands when confronting the most heinous crimes.

It is the appropriate response to those who commit the most shocking and vile murders, and it ensures the last word still belongs to the innocent victims who can no longer speak for themselves.

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<https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2021/01/06/lethal-injection-isnt-illegal-or-wrong-arizona-must-resume-executions/4135319001/>