



# OREGON GOVERNOR COMMUTES ALL 17 OF STATE'S DEATH SENTENCES - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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*Photo: The execution room at the Oregon State Penitentiary is pictured on Nov. 18, 2011, in Salem, Ore.*

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced Tuesday that she is commuting the sentences of all of the state's 17 inmates awaiting execution, saying their death sentences will be changed to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Brown, a Democrat with less than a month remaining in office, said she was using her executive clemency powers to commute the sentences and that her order will take effect on Wednesday.

"I have long believed that justice is not advanced by taking a life, and the state should not be in the business of executing people — even if a terrible crime placed them in prison," Brown said in a statement.

Oregon has not executed a prisoner since 1997. In Brown's first news conference after becoming governor in 2015, she announced she would continue the death penalty moratorium imposed by her predecessor, former Gov. John Kitzhaber.

So far, 17 people have been executed in the U.S. in 2022, all by lethal injection and all in Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, Missouri and Alabama, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

Like Oregon, some other states are moving away from the death penalty.

In California, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom imposed a moratorium on executions in 2019 and shut down the state's execution chamber at San Quentin. A year ago, he moved to dismantle America's largest death row by moving all condemned inmates to other prisons within two years.

In Oregon, Brown is known for exercising her authority to grant clemency.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Brown granted clemency to nearly 1,000 people convicted of crimes. Two district attorneys, along with family members of crime victims, sued the governor and other state officials to stop the clemency actions. But the Oregon Court of Appeals ruled in August that she acted within her authority.

The prosecutors, in particular, objected to Brown's decision to allow 73 people convicted of murder, assault, rape and manslaughter while they were younger than 18 to apply for early release.

Brown noted that previously she granted commutations "to individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary growth and rehabilitation" but said that assessment didn't apply in her latest decision.

"This commutation is not based on any rehabilitative efforts by the individuals on death row," Brown said. "Instead, it reflects the recognition that the death penalty is immoral. It is an irreversible punishment that does not allow for correction."

The Oregon Department of Corrections announced in May 2020 it was phasing out its death row and reassigning those inmates to other special housing units or general population units at the state penitentiary in Salem and other state prisons.

A list of inmates with death sentences provided by the governor's office had 17 names.

But the state Department of Corrections' website lists 21 names. One of those prisoners, however, had his death sentence overturned by the Oregon Supreme Court in 2021 because the crime he committed was no longer eligible for the death penalty under a 2019 law.

Officials in the governor's office and the corrections department did not immediately respond to an attempt to reconcile the lists.