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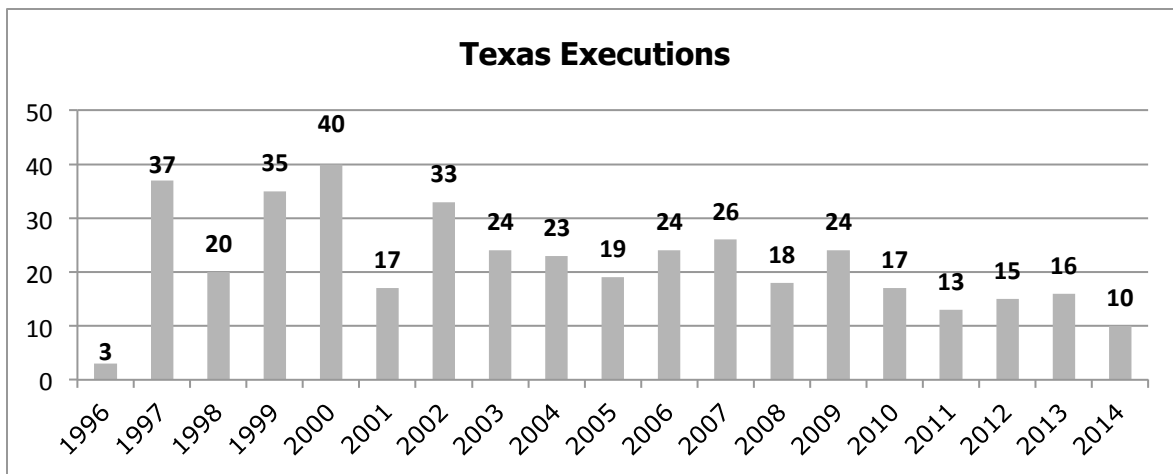
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**Texas Executions Drop to Lowest Number Since 1996,
According to New Report by TCADP**

*New death sentences decline nearly 80% since 1999,
remain geographically isolated*

(Austin, Texas) — The State of Texas executed 10 people in 2014, the fewest executions in the state since 1996, according to the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty's (TCADP) new report, [Texas Death Penalty Developments in 2014: The Year in Review](#).

"Over the last decade, we have witnessed significant change when it comes to use of the death penalty in Texas, mirroring national trends. Texas has gone from a peak of 40 executions in 2000 to the fewest executions in nearly two decades," said Kristin Houlé, Executive Director of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.



The decline in new death sentences, which more accurately reflects current attitudes towards the death penalty, has been even more precipitous. In 1999, prosecutors sought and juries imposed 48 new death sentences. This year, new death sentences in Texas remained near record-low levels, with 11 new death sentences coming from just 8 of the state's 254 counties. Prosecutors in the Harris County District Attorney's Office accounted for four of the ten new death sentences imposed by juries this year.

Five counties – which represent just 2% of the state’s 254 counties – are responsible for more than 60% of new death sentences in the last five years.

New death sentences remain both geographically isolated and racially biased. Five of the new death row inmates in 2014 are African-American, three are white, and two are Hispanic. Over the last five years, prosecutors have imposed 60% of all new death sentences on African-Americans.

These disparities are even more pronounced in Harris County, where 15 of the last 18 defendants sentenced to death are African-American and the other 3 are Hispanic. The last death sentence sought by prosecutors and imposed on a white defendant by a Harris County jury was in November 2004, when serial killer Anthony Shore was sent to death row.

Notably, prosecutors in Dallas County did not pursue the death penalty in any new capital murder trials in 2014.

Texas accounted for less than 30% of U.S. executions, administering the same number of lethal injections as Missouri this year. Information on national death penalty developments is available in a new report released today by the Death Penalty Information Center: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/YearEnd2014>.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities, two Mexican nationals, two women, and two men who were just months past their 18th birthdays at the time of the crime were among those executed by the State of Texas this year. Rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court prohibit the death penalty for persons with intellectual disabilities and those under age 18 at the time of the crime.

It was the first time since 2002 that Texas executed two women in the same year. Harris (3) and Bexar (2) Counties together accounted for half of the executions in 2014.

Of the 10 people executed by the State of Texas in 2014, four were Hispanic, four were African-American, and two were white.

Executions involved a compounded form of pentobarbital, supplied by an unidentified pharmacy or pharmacist. In May, outgoing Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott reversed the position his office took in three prior opinions in recent years and ruled instead that officials with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice do not have to disclose information about the drug supplier. A lawsuit brought by attorneys for death row inmates seeking information about the drug source under the Texas Public Information Act remains pending.

Two contentious executions did not take place as scheduled this year due to last-minute intervention by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit:

- On May 13, 2014, the day of Robert Campbell’s scheduled execution, the Fifth Circuit granted a stay in order to consider newly discovered evidence of his

mental impairment. To date, no court has considered evidence of Campbell's intellectual disabilities, which bars his execution under the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Atkins vs. Virginia* (2002).

- On December 3, 2014, less than eight hours before his scheduled execution, the Fifth Circuit granted a stay to Scott Panetti to consider the "complex legal questions" surrounding his case, specifically, his competency to be executed. Panetti, whose competency has not been evaluated in seven years, has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and has a fixed delusion that Satan, working through the state, is trying to kill him for preaching the Gospel.

A total of seven inmates received reprieves this year, including stays granted by the courts and the withdrawal of execution dates.

"The cases of individuals scheduled for execution this year illustrate deep flaws that undermine the fairness and accuracy of our state's capital punishment system," said Kathryn Kase, Executive Director of the Texas Defender Service. "Texas legislators must address these issues when they convene in January."

Other highlights of *Texas Death Penalty Developments in 2014: The Year in Review*:

- On October 8, 2014, Manuel Velez was released from prison in Huntsville after spending nine years in prison, including four years on death row. One year earlier, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals overturned his capital murder conviction in the 2008 death of one-year-old Angel Gabriel Moreno in Cameron County. The court agreed with a state district judge's assessment that Velez's defense attorneys failed to present critical medical evidence that substantiated his claim of innocence. Since 2011, at least 17 individuals have been removed from death row in Texas after receiving reduced sentences.
- Death-qualified juries rejected the death penalty in the sentencing phase in two capital trials this year. In both cases, juries determined that mitigating evidence warranted a sentence other than death. Over the last five years, death-qualified juries have rejected the death penalty in at least 14 capital murder trials.
- Texas has executed a total of 518 people since 1982; of these, 279 – or 54% – occurred during the administration of outgoing Texas Governor Rick Perry (2001-2014), more than any other governor in U.S. history.

"Attitudes toward the death penalty are shifting as public confidence in the criminal justice system erodes," said Kristin Houlié. "At this critical moment in our state's experience with the death penalty, concerned citizens and elected officials should take a close look at the realities of this irreversible, arbitrary, and costly punishment and consider alternative ways of achieving justice."

TCADP is a statewide, grassroots advocacy organization based in Austin.

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Texas Death Penalty Developments in 2014: The Year in Review is available online at <http://tcadp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Texas-Death-Penalty-Developments-in-2014-FINAL.pdf>. Contact report author Kristin Houlé at khoule@tcadp.org to receive a copy directly via email. See the report for additional tables illustrating trends with executions and death sentences. An infographic is available at http://tcadp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/TCADP_2014_infographic.png.

The following individuals are available for further comment on the topics raised by these year-end statistics:

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The Death Penalty Information Center's report on national developments is available at deathpenaltyinfo.org/YearEndReport2014.