

# Utah Lawmakers Once Again Consider Ending Death Penalty

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**AP**

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah lawmakers are once again considering getting rid of the death penalty, two years after legislators came close to making the move.

A bill sponsored by Republican state Rep. Gage Froerer of Huntsville would prohibit Utah prosecutors from seeking the death penalty starting May 8, the Salt Lake Tribune reported Tuesday.

The nine men currently on death row would still be executed.

Utah legislators came close to abolishing the death penalty in 2016 — but the bill never reached the House floor before the midnight deadline on the last night of session. The issue was not considered during last year's session.

Froerer said he will elaborate on the legislation later this week.

If passed, Utah would join 19 other states and the District of Columbia in outlawing capital punishment.

Groups such as American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, Libertas Institute and Conservatives Concerned about the Death Penalty have voiced support for abolishing Utah's death penalty. Lawmakers also are considering another death penalty-related bill which would request that legislative auditors study the costs of capital punishment versus a life-without-parole sentence. Since 2010, Utah prosecutors have filed 119 aggravated murder cases, according to Utah court data. Such cases can result in punishments of 25 years to life, life in prison without the possibility of parole, or death. Only one of those cases — a retrial of a 1993 case — resulted in a death sentence.

The last execution in Utah was carried out in 2010, when Ronnie Lee Gardner was killed by firing squad for the 1984 murder of attorney Michael Burdell during Gardner's failed escape attempt from Salt Lake City's 3rd District courthouse.

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Information from: The Salt Lake Tribune, <http://www.sltrib.com>

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