

As Oklahoma Prepares to Execute an Innocent Man, 45 Pro-Death Penalty Republicans and the OK Attorney General are Calling for a New Trial

Meanwhile, the Actual, Admitted Killer Serves Life in Prison in a Medium Security Prison

Richard Glossip has been on Oklahoma's death row for 26 years, even though everyone agrees it was another man, Justin Sneed, who actually murdered Barry Van Treese. Glossip's conviction was based solely on allegations Sneed made implicating Glossip in a murder-for-hire scheme to save himself from the death penalty. But new evidence, new witnesses, and new independent investigations reveal the crime was a botched robbery carried out by Sneed, and that Glossip wasn't involved. That's why even leading pro-death penalty Republicans believe Glossip should get a new trial. Now, while Sneed serves life in a medium-security prison, Glossip sits on death row. He has had ten previously scheduled execution dates, has been served three last meals, and was almost executed in 2015 using the wrong drug. Glossip's next, ultimate, and final execution date could be fast approaching.

The Only Evidence is a Story Made Up by the Admitted Killer, a Known Thief and Meth Addict Who Changed His Story Eight Times in Order to Save Himself

On January 7, 1997, 19-year-old motel maintenance man Justin Sneed—who had a criminal record and known meth addiction, beat motel owner Barry Van Treese to death with a baseball bat. Cash was also stolen from Van Treese's car. Sneed was caught, and in a videotaped confession with police, Sneed changed his story eight times, only implicating motel manager Richard Glossip—a man who had never been in trouble with the law—in a murder-for-hire plot after detectives fed Glossip's name to him and suggested that if he didn't accuse Glossip, that Sneed could be executed. That's all the "evidence" there was against Glossip. No DNA. No fingerprints. No witnesses to corroborate Sneed's accusation. Just the admitted killer's story, a story that would change multiple times during Glossip's trials as well.

Inexperienced Defense Attorneys Bungled Two Trials, While Law Enforcement Destroyed Evidence and Even Arrested Defense Witnesses

Glossip was sentenced to death after his hired lawyer demonstrated that he didn't know how to cross examine witnesses, called only one defense witness (Glossip's girlfriend), failed to tell the jury about Sneed's history of thievery and meth addiction, and neglected to show them Sneed's coerced confession which featured his ever-changing story. The State Court of Criminal Appeals later overturned the conviction due to "extremely weak" evidence, and said there was "no excuse" for Glossip's lawyer's "unreadiness." Glossip then had a second trial, but his new lawyers repeated the same failures (this time calling zero witnesses) and he was sentenced to death again. Meanwhile, police destroyed a critical box of crime scene and financial evidence. Prosecutors also refused to turn over security camera footage to the defense, and when witnesses came forward to challenge Sneed's story, they were issued arrest warrants.

New Witnesses Say Sneed Admitted to Framing Glossip, and Sneed Has Recently Attempted to Recant His Testimony

Since 2015, 29 new witnesses have come forward, including several people who had been locked up with Sneed. Multiple witnesses heard Sneed say that he and his girlfriend had committed the murder and Glossip wasn't involved, and one witness reported that Sneed even bragged about framing Glossip for

the crime. Most recently, new evidence has emerged that Sneed previously asked his attorney several times about possibly recanting his testimony against Glossip.

Two Independent Investigations Find Glossip’s Conviction Should Be Vacated

At the request of several Republican Oklahoma state legislators, international law firm Reed Smith conducted an independent investigation of the case. More than 30 attorneys and three investigators spent more than 3,000 hours poring over 146,000 pages of documents, and interviewed 72 witnesses, 11 jurors, and two experts. The investigation ultimately found that if a jury was presented with all the evidence now available, no reasonable juror would find Glossip guilty.

In January 2023, Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond opened file boxes that the District Attorney had long hidden from Glossip’s defense, and appointed his own independent counsel to investigate the case and files. His investigator concluded, “[I] believe the numerous and appellate defects throughout the history of this case can be remedied only by a retrial.”

Oklahoma’s Pro-Death Penalty AG Joins 45 Pro-Death Penalty Republican State Legislators in Calling for a New Trial

In the wake of the two independent investigations, AG Drummond, a pro-death penalty Republican, joined 62 Oklahoma state legislators—including 45 pro-death penalty Republicans—in calling for a new trial for Glossip. Drummond concluded that he “cannot stand behind the murder conviction and death sentence of Richard Glossip.” He later said that “based on the complete record including the new evidence the jury did not hear, it would represent a grave injustice to execute a man whose trial conviction was impugned by a litany of errors, that when taken in total would have created reasonable doubt. No execution should be carried out under such questionable circumstances.” Yet, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals (OCCA) denied Drummond’s request to remand the case back to district court where it could be retried. So Glossip’s clemency hearing moved forward on April 26th, 2023. Drummond personally appeared on behalf of the state asking the board to grant clemency, but Glossip was denied yet again by a 2-2 vote (the fifth voting member was the prosecutor's husband and had to recuse himself). Three votes were needed for clemency; all no votes came from former district attorneys.

In May 2023, the Supreme Court Stayed Glossip’s Execution. Shortly Thereafter, AG Drummond Filed a Reply Brief Calling for Glossip’s Conviction to be Vacated.

Glossip’s fate now lies in the hands of the Supreme Court. Glossip has filed 2 briefs, this time with the support of AG Drummond. In an unprecedented filing, the State of Oklahoma, through AG Drummond, supports Mr. Glossip’s request to have his case remanded back to the district court. Both parties await the decision of the highest court in the nation to either overrule the OCCA decision and send the case back for retrial, or they could deny this historic request and let Glossip's execution once again move forward.