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INDIANA LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL

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Offender Benjamin Donald Ritchie Executed by Lethal Injection



LaPorte County | Offender Benjamin Donald Ritchie, 45, of Indianapolis, was executed by lethal injection today at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City for the line of duty death of Officer William Ronald Toney of the Beech Grove Police Department.

Toney, 31, was shot by Ritchie during a foot pursuit after he fled from a traffic stop in a stolen van on September 29, 2000. He was shot above his bullet-resistant vest and transported to Wishard Memorial Hospital in Indianapolis where he was pronounced dead.

Ritchie, who was then 20 years old and on probation for a felony burglary conviction from Marion County in 1998, was subsequently apprehended and charged in a death penalty case.

He was later found guilty by a jury and on October 15, 2002, Marion Superior Judge Patricia J. Gifford sentenced him to death for murder; 20 years for unlawful possession of a firearm by a serious violent felon, a Class B felony; three years for auto theft, a Class D felony; and three years for resisting law enforcement, a Class D felony.

Although an original execution date was set for October 15, 2003, Ritchie had remained on death row for 22 years, 217 days while pursuing a direct appeal in 2004, a post-conviction appeal in 2007 and federal habeas corpus proceedings, in which the U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari in April 2017.

After a 15-year moratorium and as the state had set an execution date for Joseph Edward Corcoran for December 18, 2024, Ritchie sought successive post-conviction relief that was denied by the Indiana Supreme Court in an evenly-divided decision with Justices Slaughter and Molter concurring, Goff and Chief Justice Rush dissenting, and Massa not participating.

The State filed a motion to set an execution date, which the Indiana Supreme Court ordered for May 20, 2025. After Ritchie petitioned the Indiana Parole Board for clemency and hearings were held, their non-binding recommendation was unanimous to Governor Mike Braun to deny clemency, which he followed and allowed the execution to proceed.

A petition for a writ of certiorari and motion to stay the execution was filed with the U.S. Supreme Court; an emergency motion for a stay of execution was filed with the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana; and an emergency motion for a preliminary injunction under 42 U.S.C. §1983 was filed with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana.

After his clemency petition was denied and all avenues of appeals were exhausted in both state and federal courts, the death warrant was carried out with Ritchie being pronounced dead at 12:46 am CDT.

The execution of Ritchie is the 150th carried out under Indiana statutes since statehood, the 19th by lethal injection and the 22nd in Indiana (1,624th in the U.S.) since 1976 when the death penalty was reinstated.

Ritchie was one of the seven inmates on Indiana death row and the only offender who had murdered a law enforcement officer, although there are two offenders awaiting trial where the death penalty is being sought in their cases.

The last execution for the murder of a law enforcement officer in the state occurred on June 15, 2007 after Michael Allen Lambert, 36, had been sentenced to death for the murder of Officer Gregg William Winters of the Muncie Police Department on January 8, 1991.

There are currently 35 offenders awaiting trial, serving their sentences, or have been released on parole or probation for their involvement in the line of duty deaths of 31 Indiana law enforcement officers and four canines.

View our memorial for Police Officer Toney at: www.officersearch.inlem.org/officer.php?id=0090

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About the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial

Founded in 2017, the Indiana Law Enforcement Memorial is a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring all of our state's fallen officers. Its mission is to honor law enforcement officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice; provide support to their surviving family members and affected agencies; and conduct research into and foster public awareness of Indiana line of duty deaths. Each of these over 500 officers are memorialized through a website maintained as an exclusive resource to our state with the most comprehensive details to preserve the history surrounding their incidents and an extensive compilation of statistical data.