

# Terry Lenamon on the Death Penalty

Sidebar with a Board Certified Expert Criminal Trial Attorney



**Terence M. Lenamon** is a Florida Bar certified expert in the area of criminal trial law. With over 17 years experience he has built a reputation as one of Florida's most respected criminal defense lawyers. His defense has been sought by many high-profile clients and has led him through 20 first-degree murder trials and eight death penalty cases. That experience has brought him national recognition as a go-to commentator on death penalty issues. He is the force behind both [deathpenaltyblog.com](http://deathpenaltyblog.com) and Florida Capital Resource Center ([floridacapitalresourcecenter.org](http://floridacapitalresourcecenter.org)), and can be reached at [terry@lenamonlaw.com](mailto:terry@lenamonlaw.com).

## Firing Squad May Execute Utah's Ronnie Lee Gardner in June 2010

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Lethal injection is so commonplace in the United States as the preferred method of imposing capital punishment that many assume it's the only option out there. [That's not true.](#)

In Utah, it was only recently that their [state legislature nixed the option of a death penalty](#) by firing squad - and when it acted, four men sat on Death Row for whom the new law did not apply. These four men were "grandfathered" into the prior law, the execution methods that were options when they were sentenced are legally still available to them today.

Ronnie Lee Gardner is one of these men - and he is choosing bullets over a needle

This week, Utah Attorney General Thomas Brunner [announced that the State will not contest](#) Gardner's motion to the court that he be killed by a firing squad instead of the standard lethal injection procedure. Assuming that Mr. Gardner files his motion promptly, the judge could rule and his June 2010 execution may well be the first execution by firing squad that this country has seen in years.

### Utah's Methods of Execution and The Options Still Available Today in the U.S.

As horrific as the image of a firing squad may be in the 21st Century, lethal injection has only been an [option for execution in Utah since the 1980s](#). Up until around 25 years ago, Utah used firing squads as its preferred execution method.

Utah law originally had beheading on the books as a means of capital punishment, but it was never used. Hanging was also a means of imposing the death penalty, used until the late 1950s. (For other execution methods used by the various states, [read our prior post](#) discussing the forms of capital punishment.)

## Firing Squad Executions in Utah

Assuming that Mr. Gardner gets his wish, his name will be added to [1996's firing squad execution by the State of Utah of John Taylor, and the infamous Gary Gilmore's death by Utah firing squad in 1977](#).

We can only assume as the procedure continues, and the execution date draws near, that Ronnie Gardner's execution will receive extended media coverage. For better or worse, it's a good guess that a lot of people will want to rubber-neck the firing squad execution, and lots of media outlets will be only too happy to serve them.