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DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER

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STATEMENT BY DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT DUNHAM
CONCERNING OKLAHOMA'S EXECUTION OF JOHN GRANT

John Grant sought to halt his execution because, he and other Oklahoma death-row prisoners said, the state's three-drug execution process is unconstitutionally cruel and unusual. The evidence supporting that allegation was strong enough for a federal district court to schedule a trial on the issue and for a panel of the Tenth Circuit to issue a stay. However, in a partisan decision, the Supreme Court — apparently more concerned with expediting executions than with fair process — actively intervened to let the execution proceed.

John Grant reportedly convulsed about two dozen times, vomited, and convulsed some more before being declared unconscious. He became a human experiment for the other death-row prisoners' challenge to Oklahoma's execution process.

Oklahoma had botched its last three execution attempts before its six-year execution pause, but apparently learned nothing from that experience. But to say this is another botched Oklahoma execution would be inadequate. Oklahoma knew full well that this was well within the realm of possible outcomes in a midazolam execution. It didn't care ... and the Supreme Court apparently didn't either.

Executions like this provide death-penalty opponents with further evidence that states who are in a rush to kill simply cannot be trusted with the death penalty. And the Supreme Court's appalling intervention to ensure the execution would occur without meaningful judicial review further undermines the legitimacy of the Court and any pretense that it is still a neutral arbiter of the law.

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