

It's time for Alabama to end outdated death penalty practices: Pass Rep. England's HB 14

HB 14 by Rep. Chris England, D-Tuscaloosa, would require unanimous jury sentencing in death penalty cases and make the ban on judicial override retroactive. Here's why Alabama Arise supports this legislation:

- 1. Alabama is one of only two states¹ that doesn't require a unanimous jury verdict to sentence someone to death.**
 - In Alabama, only 10 jurors need to agree to sentence someone to death. Every other state with a death penalty requires a unanimous jury sentencing verdict.
 - The Supreme Court recently ruled in [Ramos v. Louisiana](#) that criminal convictions for serious offenses must be unanimous, because the Constitution requires a jury to find a person guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.
 - Decisions to impose a death sentence should have to be unanimous, too. There's a reason nearly every other state with the death penalty requires unanimous jury sentencing in death penalty cases: taking someone's life isn't something that can be undone.
 - Alarmingly, [one person is exonerated for every eight people](#) executed from Alabama's death row.
- 2. Judicial override ended in 2017, but more than 30 people are still on death row in Alabama because a judge overruled the jury's sentence.**
 - Until 2017, [Alabama was the last state allowing judges to override a jury's decision](#) to impose a life sentence and instead sentence someone to death.
 - Judges used this practice, known as judicial override, to undermine the sentencing decisions made by juries. This practice was one of the factors that contributed to [Alabama's consistent top-five ranking](#) in executions per capita.
 - Judicial override in Alabama ended in 2017, but that legislation didn't benefit everyone because the ban was not retroactive.
 - More than 30 people now on Alabama's death row would benefit from this provision as they were put there by a judge who undermined a jury's decision not to execute someone.

¹ [Florida passed a law in 2023](#) that allows a non-unanimous jury to impose a death sentence in the state.

It's time for Alabama to end outdated death penalty practices: Pass Rep. England's HB 14

- 1. Alabama is one of only two states that doesn't require a unanimous jury verdict to sentence someone to death.**
- 2. Judicial override ended in 2017, but more than 30 people are still on death row in Alabama because a judge overruled the jury's sentence.**