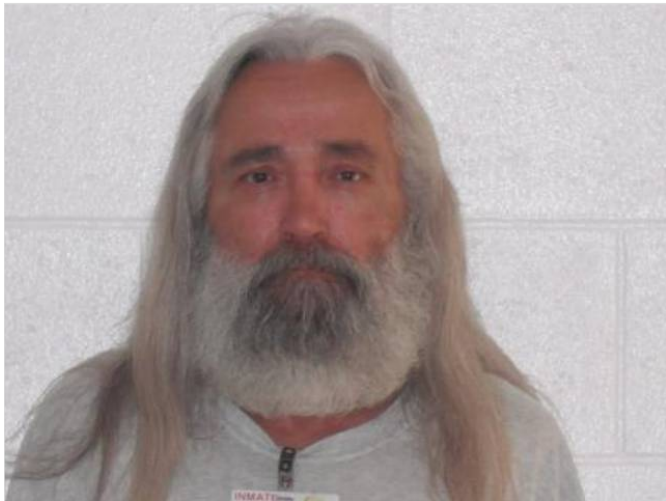


# Oklahoma governor commutes sentence for several men serving life without parole



by Brianna Bailey • Published: April 30, 2017 5:00 AM CDT • Updated: April 30, 2017 5:00 AM CDT



Jesse Rose

Gov. Mary Fallin has commuted the sentences of four more Oklahoma inmates serving life without parole for drug offenses, including William Dufries, a former Florida resident caught hauling 67 pounds of marijuana in a recreational vehicle.

Fallin commuted the inmates' sentences from life without parole to life, creating the potential for the four men one day to be paroled.

Dufries, 59, was convicted of drug trafficking after an Oklahoma Highway Patrol trooper found the marijuana during a search of his RV in 2003. Dufries had been pulled over on Interstate 40 in Canadian County for a broken taillight.

Dufries claims to have been transporting the marijuana to help pay his medical bills after a series of health problems. His case has drawn national attention from the American Civil Liberties Union and sentencing reform groups.

Dufries had exhausted all of his appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear Dufries' case in 2013, so his only hope for release one day was a commutation or pardon, said attorney James Hankins, who previously represented Dufries.

Hankins now represents Michael Randolph, 36, another nonviolent drug offender serving life without parole in Oklahoma for drug trafficking. The recent commutations give Hankins hope that his client also one day may have his sentence commuted.

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"There is a huge disconnect for the people with this sentence," Hankins said. "They get into prison serving life without parole for drugs and they see violent or very violent criminals serving nowhere near that amount of time."

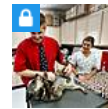
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Fallin also approved a commutation for K.O. Cooper, 76. Cooper is believed to be the oldest inmate serving life without parole for drug-related crimes in Oklahoma.

Cooper was convicted in 2012 of drug trafficking for selling cocaine out of his home in Enid.

The governor also approved commutations for Kevin Martin, 55, and Jesse Rose, 58.

Since June 2016, Fallin has approved commutations for 25 offenders serving life without parole for drug-related convictions, or about a third of Oklahoma prison inmates serving such sentences.

There are still 52 inmates in Oklahoma serving life without parole for drug offenses, according to the Oklahoma Department of Corrections inmate database.

A change in Oklahoma law in 2015 did away with mandatory life sentencing for drug trafficking after two previous felony drug convictions, but the new law was not retroactive.

Sen. Greg Treat, R-Oklahoma City, has authored a bill under consideration in the Legislature this session that would allow nonviolent offenders sentenced to life without parole to have their sentences modified after 10 years in prison. Senate Bill 689 has passed preliminary votes in the House and Senate but final legislative action remains to be taken.



Brianna Bailey



Brianna Bailey joined The Oklahoman in January 2013 as a business writer. During her time at The Oklahoman, she has walked across Oklahoma City... [read more >](#)

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