

US state: Execution table can support obese inmate

October 23 2012, by Andrew Welsh-huggins

(AP)—The warden of the prison where Ohio puts inmates to death says the state's execution table can easily hold a 400-pound (181-kilogram) condemned inmate who has argued he is so big it might collapse.

The table was tested by placing an equally heavy prison employee on it and by placing weights on it.

"The [execution](#) table held firmly and showed no signs of instability," Donald Morgan, warden at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, said in a court filing late Monday opposing inmate Ronald Post's request to be spared.

Post's attorneys said last month he weighs 480 pounds (217 kilograms), while the state says Post weighed 396 pounds (179 kilograms) last week.

Post, 53, is scheduled to die Jan. 16 for the 1983 shooting death of Helen Vantz.

Vantz's son, Bill Vantz, has called Post's arguments "laughable."

Post argues his weight, vein access, [scar tissue](#), depression and other [medical problems](#) raise the likelihood his executioners would encounter severe problems.

"Indeed, given his unique physical and [medical condition](#), there is a substantial risk that any attempt to execute him will result in serious

physical and psychological pain to him, as well as an execution involving a torturous and lingering death," a court filing said last month.

Morgan said he successfully tested the strength of the table with an employee who weighed 420 pounds (190 kilograms) and later by piling 540 pounds (244 kilograms) of weight on the table.

Post's attorneys warned in a statement Tuesday that trying to execute Post will turn out worse than the state's unsuccessful 2009 attempt to execute Romell Broom, whose execution was stopped after about two hours when executioners could not find a usable vein.

With Broom, "Ohio's execution team experienced the [stress](#) of what it is like to try over and over to establish vein access and repeatedly fail, and they will unfortunately get that experience tenfold with Mr. Post," the [attorneys](#) said.

Ohio executes [inmates](#) with a single dose of pentobarbital, usually injected through the arms.

Post has tried losing weight, but knee and back problems have made it difficult to exercise, according to his court filing. Post's request for gastric bypass surgery has been denied, he has been encouraged not to walk because he's at risk for falling, and severe [depression](#) has contributed to his inability to limit how much he eats, his filing said.

While at the Mansfield Correctional Institution, Post "used that prison's exercise bike until it broke under his weight," according to the filing.

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