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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Secures Death Sentence of 1990's Rapist-Murderer at Florida Supreme Court

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Capital Appeals Division secured a death sentence for Joseph Zieler for the 1990 murder and rape of an 11-year-old girl and her babysitter during a home invasion. Zieler evaded justice for decades until the [Combined DNA Index System \(CODIS\)](#) linked him to his crimes.

"This depraved criminal managed to sleep at night for decades as he evaded justice for the rape and murder of a little girl and her babysitter," **said Attorney General James Uthmeier.** "Due to the tireless work of Assistant Attorney General Christina Pacheco, and with support from the Solicitor General's Office, we affirmed the ultimate form of punishment, and he will never see the outside of a prison cell again."

The Florida Supreme Court's affirmation of Zieler's conviction is one of the first capital sentences under Florida's new death penalty law, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 450](#), which reformed Florida's death penalty statutes, reducing the number of jurors needed to recommend capital punishment from unanimous to a supermajority of eight jurors out of twelve. Governor Ron DeSantis [signed SB 450](#) into law on April 20, 2023.

Zieler will await his execution in the Florida Department of Corrections.

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