

# Man set to die next month gets new attorney

## David Johnston was sentence to die for the 1983 murder of Orlando woman

Sarah Lundy | Sentinel Staff Writer  
12:54 PM EDT, April 24, 2009

David Johnston -- who is set to die by lethal injection next month -- appeared in Orange County court this morning surrounded by more than a dozen security officials.

This was his first appearance in court since Gov. Charlie Crist signed a death warrant earlier this week.

The convicted killer Friday met his new attorney, D. Todd Doss, after the short hearing before Orange Circuit Court Judge Bob Wattles. Johnston, 49, was being represented by attorneys from the Capital Collateral Regional Counsel, a state-funded agency that represents death row inmates.

However, the state's budget cuts have impacted the regional counsel offices so much that they requested an outside attorney be appointed to represent Johnston.

In 1983, Johnston was convicted of first-degree murder and was sentenced the death penalty a year later. Authorities say Johnston, who was 23 at the time, stabbed and strangled 84-year-old Mary Hammond inside her Orlando apartment. A few days later, he called 911, identified himself as Martin White, and told the police "somebody killed my grandma" and gave Hammond's address.

Investigators arrested Johnston after finding him with blood-stained clothes and a scratched face. He also gave various stories as to what happened, according to court records.

This isn't the first time Johnston as faced a potential day of execution.

In 1988, then-Gov. Bob Martinez signed a death warrant for him. Two months later, the Florida Supreme Court stayed the execution while Johnston finished his appeals.