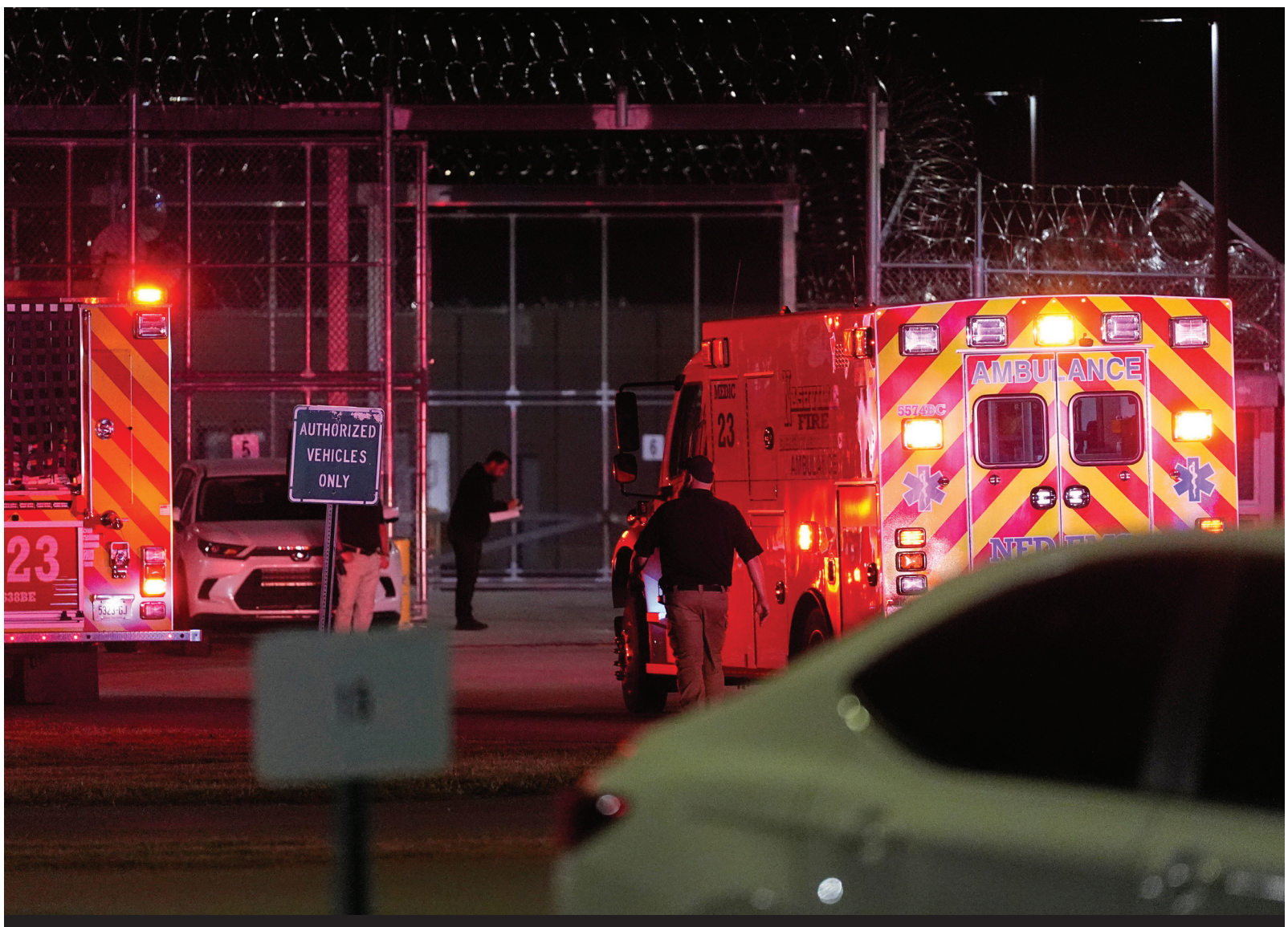
News

CHRISTA PIKE IS CONSCIOUS AND SPEAKING AFTER TENNESSEE FAILED EXECUTION, HER ATTORNEYS SAY



Emergency vehicles arrive at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution after the execution of Christa Pike was halted Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2026, in Nashville, Tenn.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tennessee death row inmate Christa Pike is awake and speaking at a hospital, her lawyers said Tuesday, six days after the state's failed attempt to execute her by lethal injection left her unconscious and on a ventilator.

Pike, 50, survived two doses of pentobarbital as executioners attempted to put her to death last Wednesday for the 1995 beating and stabbing death of classmate Colleen Slemmer. The lethal injection drug didn't kill her, but her lawyers said her arms were left burned and blistered.

Her survival raises further questions about her medical and legal future. Her attorneys said her prognosis remains unclear and that she faces a long recovery.

"Against all odds, Christa Pike is conscious, speaking, and continues to receive critical medical care," attorneys for Pike said in a statement. "Despite the severe damage she endured to her arms, she is still handcuffed and shackled to the bed. Her recovery is medically unprecedented."

Her attorneys said they are grateful for the first responders and the medical team at the hospital "who treated Christa like a human and have provided exceptional care to her."

It's the first indication Pike's health has improved

As recently as Sunday, Pike's attorneys said she had remained unconscious and on a ventilator.

Dr. Joel Zivot, a professor of anesthesiology and surgery in Atlanta who consulted as an expert for Pike's legal team, said the development "bodes well for a good recovery." But, he added, it could be weeks or months before anyone knows exactly what her recovery might look like, and whether her competency could be restored to a level that might enable the state to try again to execute her.

"She's still in the ICU," he said. "She has recovered to a certain degree that she's able to be off a ventilator and able to speak, but in no way would I announce her free of further serious risk. There's still a lot of bad things that can happen here, even when everyone is doing their job well."

A spokesperson for the Tennessee Department of Correction said she could provide no information other than that Pike remained hospitalized Tuesday.

A court hearing is set for Wednesday

Pike's attorneys are set to go to court Wednesday as they seek to learn more about what happened in the failed lethal injection.

The attorneys are seeking a court order requiring the Tennessee Department of Correction to preserve evidence, including drug lot numbers, records and other information from the Sept. 30 attempted execution. Chancery Court Judge I'Ashea Myles scheduled a Wednesday morning status conference in the case.

Pike's attorneys said in their Tuesday statement that they continue to ask outgoing Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee to commute Pike's sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

"Christa is a survivor and will take recovery one day at a time," her attorneys said.

Lee halted further executions following Pike's hospitalization and ordered a "comprehensive, third-party review to determine exactly what occurred." U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn, the state's Republican candidate to replace him, called on the state to explore other methods of execution to ensure it can continue carrying out capital punishment.

Could the state try again?

In addition to questions about competency — whether Pike can understand why she would be put to death — Pike has strong arguments that it would be cruel and unusual for the state to try again to execute her, said Deborah Denno, a Fordham Law professor who has studied execution methods for 36 years. It could also violate the prohibition on double jeopardy, trying or punishing someone twice for the same offense, Denno said.

In other recent cases, states have been allowed to try again after failing to establish a suitable intravenous line, she said, but Pike is the first person to survive after the lethal drug was actually administered.

"They carried out every aspect of the execution," Denno said. "She didn't die, but every process they intended, they did it."

Seattle University Law Professor Michael Russo, who handled capital cases as a public defender in Los Angeles, called the failed execution horrible but said he doubted whether the Supreme Court would stop the state from trying again on double-jeopardy grounds, should it decide to do so.

"There's nobody else in the history of the death penalty in this country who has gone through what she's been through," Russo said. But, he added, "I think what this Supreme Court would say is, her sentence was to die — to be executed — not to suffer an attempt at execution."



This photo provided by the Tennessee Department of Correction shows Christa Pike on Jan. 12, 2023.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Daily Campus

Printing since 1896, The Daily Campus is the oldest and largest independent student publication at the University of Connecticut. The Daily Campus circulates 1,500 newspapers daily and strives to serve the student body by delivering accurate, relevant and timely news and content, both in print and online at Daily Campus.com. Our staff is comprised entirely of students, with roughly 200 undergraduates gaining professional development while contributing to the daily production of the paper, with positions including writers, photographers, copy editors, page layout designers, graphic designers, advertisement representatives, receptionists, delivery drivers and digital producers.
Thanks for reading.

Want to advertise in print or online?
businessmanager@dailycampus.com

Corrections and Clarifications:
Send Corrections to EIC@dailycampus.com

Tuesday, October 6, 2026
Copy Editors: Sydney Vallone, Mak Blake
News Designer: Chelsea Kennedy
Life Designer: Sarah Cartagena
Sports Designer: Elena Avaliani
Opinion Designer: Isabella Kulawik
Photo Producer: Sarah Turner

Samantha Brody, Editor-in-Chief
Isabella Kulawik, Managing Editor
Pierce Colfer, Business Manager
Connor Lafferty, Digital Editor
Camille Kiang, Associate Managing Editor
Lilli-Ann Hanlon, Associate Managing Editor
Joshua Cummings, Associate Digital Editor

Mikayla Bunnell
News Editor
Kevin Guinan
Associate News Editor
Avery Becker
Sports Editor
Jake McCreven
Associate Sports Editor
Emma Meidinger
Photo Editor
Madison Hendricks
Associate Photo Editor
Maleena Muzio
Life Editor
Ayyan Tamjeed
Associate Life Editor
Patrick Minnerly
Opinion Editor
Gianna Cassino
Associate Opinion Editor
Lillian LaFemina
Artist Editor
Colbi Loranger
Associate Artist Editor
Uzoma Chukwurah
Outreach/Social Media Coordinator
Sofiyah Shiwnarine
Associate SMOC
Aleia Bischof
Circulation Manager
Valley Publishing Company
Derby, Conn.

For more information about getting involved as an editorial, business or digital employee:
Editorial · managingeditor@dailycampus.com
Business · businessmanager@dailycampus.com
Digital · digital@dailycampus.com

Prefer to read our content online?

Check out our newly redesigned website at dailycampus.com and follow us on social media.
Instagram · The_DailyCampus
Facebook · The Daily Campus
Twitter · The_DailyCampus

Want to write, photograph or draw for The Daily Campus?

The Daily Campus welcomes writers, photographers and artists of all backgrounds, interests, majors and levels of experience. To get involved, it's as easy as attending section meetings on Sunday nights, all at the Daily Campus building, (1266 Storrs Road) or reaching out to an email below:

Opinion (Meetings at 5 p.m.)
opinion@dailycampus.com
News (Meetings at 5 p.m.)
news@dailycampus.com
Life (Meetings at 6 p.m.)
life@dailycampus.com
Sports (Meetings at 7 p.m.)
sports@dailycampus.com
Photo (Meetings at 9 p.m.)
photo@dailycampus.com
Artists (Meetings at 9 p.m.)
artists@dailycampus.com