



May 2022: Highest Number of Exonerations Reported in One Month

57 Exonerations Includes Registry's First Federal Executive Pardon



Abraham Bolden, the first Black Secret Service agent to serve on a presidential detail, was pardoned by President Joe Biden in 2022. (Photo courtesy of Blackpast)

Last month, we entered into the Registry the exoneration of [Abraham Bolden](#), who was pardoned by President Joe Biden. It is an extraordinary case, and the first federal executive-branch pardon in the Registry. As a columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times* noted in 2021, “While Bolden’s life story might sound like a conspiracy theory to some, Black Americans will identify with the brand of injustice that buries its victims under false accusations and legal documents.”

Bolden was the first Black U.S. Secret Service agent assigned to a presidential detail. During Bolden’s service, he endured racial prejudice from other agents. In 1964, he was sentenced to six years in prison after he was convicted of soliciting a \$50,000 bribe.

In his 2008 autobiography, Bolden said that he was framed by agents because he had complained that members of President John F. Kennedy's security detail had been drinking the night before Kennedy was assassinated and were derelict in their duty. He was pardoned on April 26, 2022, many years after a prosecution witness admitted lying during Bolden's trial.

Granting a pardon is one of the many powers held by presidents and governors. For presidents, this power comes directly from the U.S. Constitution. Governors get their pardon powers from their respective state constitutions.

There are few legal restraints on these pardons, although there is the potential for political backlash. That's why so many governors and presidents issue the bulk of their pardons as they are leaving office. It's also why the Registry approaches pardons with a cautious eye.

To date, we have entered 168 exonerations based on executive-branch pardons. We reject the vast majority of pardons because most are based on political considerations and fail to meet our [criteria for inclusion](#). For example, outgoing Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin pardoned 254 people in 2019 after he lost a bid for reelection. Of those, only five men and one woman met our criteria for inclusion in the Registry.

Also in May, we welcomed Patricia Cummings as the Registry's first executive director. Many of you know Patricia. She has been a leader in the innocence movement through her work at conviction integrity units in district attorney's offices in Dallas, Texas, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and at the Innocence Project of Texas. She gave an extensive interview last month to the [Crime Report](#), published by the John Jay College Center on Media, Crime and Justice about her work, the Registry, and efforts to reform our criminal legal system.

57 Individual Exonerations Posted

Including Abraham Bolden's exoneration, we published 57 individual exonerations in May. This is the largest monthly number in the Registry's history.

In 2013, [Gregory Hopkins](#) was convicted of third-degree murder and sentenced to eight to 16 years in prison for a 1979 murder in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. He was granted a new trial, and the charges were dismissed after the forensic evidence linking him to the crime was discredited as having no basis.

In 2007, [Terance Calhoun](#) was sentenced to 17 to 32 years in prison after pleading guilty to two sexual assaults in Detroit, Michigan. He was exonerated in 2022 by the discovery that DNA testing in 2007 had excluded him from one of the crimes, but the test

[Daniel Rodriguez](#), of Chicago, Illinois, was convicted of murder in 1993. He was released from prison in 2008 and exonerated in 2022 by evidence that a detective physically abused him until he gave a false confession.

In 2013, [Ray Hicks](#) was sentenced to 180 days in Texas state jail after pleading guilty to passing a counterfeit \$100 bill. He was exonerated in 2022 after the U.S. Secret Service concluded that the bill was genuine.

In 1986, [Edward Taylor](#) of Florida was sentenced to life in prison for molesting a

results were never disclosed.

[Charles Head](#), formerly of La Habra, California, pled guilty in 2006 to having an unregistered weapon. He was exonerated in 2021 after finding documentation that showed he had properly registered the gun.

In 2016, [Chris Taffner](#) was sentenced to 140 years in prison after he was convicted of sexually assaulting two adopted daughters and a foster daughter in Washington County, Arkansas. He was granted a new trial based on evidence that the defense was not given access to records showing that one of the girls had previously made a similar allegation that was false. The prosecution dismissed the charges in May 2022.

[Thomas James](#) was convicted in 1991 of murder in Miami, Florida. He was exonerated in 2022 after an investigation by GQ magazine suggested he was mistakenly arrested because he shared the same name with a man who was a more likely suspect.

[Peter Jean-Gilles](#) pled guilty in 2012 to several burglaries in Biscayne Park, Florida. He was exonerated in 2019 after the officers involved in his arrest pled guilty to civil-rights violations, which cast doubt on the affidavits filed in Jean-Gilles's case.

[S. Jermaine Roland](#) was convicted in 2013 of assault, making threats, and misdemeanor child sexual abuse in Washington, D.C. He was exonerated in 2015 after the alleged victim was found to have testified falsely at trial.

4-year-old girl. He was exonerated in 2022 based on evidence that his brother was the real perpetrator and statements by the victim that the prosecution had failed to disclose to the defense at trial.

In 2007, [Marc Douglas](#) was sentenced to 20 years in prison for a shooting in Peekskill, New York. He was exonerated in 2020 after the victim recanted his identification, other evidence pointed to the real gunman, and the prosecution admitted failing to disclose evidence that impeached the victim's testimony.

In 2018, [James Hill](#) was sentenced to 47 years in prison for the murder of a police officer in 1980 in Hammond, Indiana. He was exonerated in 2022 after DNA tests failed to link him to the getaway car and after the disclosure of statements by two witnesses that contradicted their trial testimony.

In 2016, [Tyrone Rogers](#) of Muskegon, Michigan, was sentenced to 29 to 48 years in prison after he was convicted of sexually assaulting his 15-year-old daughter. He was granted a new trial, and the charge was dismissed in March 2022 after the girl recanted and evidence showed she had made similar false accusations against others.

In 2012, [Robert Hill](#) was sentenced to 70 years in prison after he was convicted of murder and attempted murder during the 2005 robbery of a liquor store in Robbins, Illinois. He was exonerated in 2021 based on evidence that police had promised he would not be prosecuted if he passed a polygraph, which he did.

We published 31 exonerations of men and women wrongly convicted based on misconduct by Chicago Police Sgt. Ronald Watts, the leader of a group of corrupt officers at the center of more than 180 exonerations. They are: [Deonta Anderson](#), [Percy Bolden](#), [Jason Brown](#), [Jerome Bynum](#), [Tracy Cooper](#), [William Crawford](#), [Christine Fisher](#), [Erica Goree](#), [Darryl Hall](#), [Gregory Haynes](#), [Dwayne Holmes](#), [Sherman Johnson](#), [Larry Hinton](#), [Roy Hinton](#), [George Key](#), [Thomas Nash](#), [Elgen Moore](#), [Jermaine Morris](#), [Anthony Mays](#),

[Ron Owens](#), [Anthony Wright Jr.](#), [Keith Owens](#), [Antoine White](#), [Dexter Willis](#), [Michael Flagg](#), [Torrence Ivory](#), [D'Andra Woods](#), [Lolita Newell](#), [Richard Scales](#), [Stephen Shelton](#), and [Tyree Smith](#).

We also posted 11 of the 35 exonerations associated with a Groups Registry case from [Tulia, Texas](#), involving a corrupt sheriff's deputy who falsely arrested these men and women on drug charges in 1999. They are: [Dennis Allen](#), [James Barrow](#), [Freddie Brookins Jr.](#), [Marilyn Cooper](#), [Armenu Ervin](#), [William Love](#), [Christopher Jackson](#), [Cleveland Henderson Jr.](#), [Donald Smith](#), [Joe Moore](#), and [Jason Williams](#).

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