On July 1, 2016, a new Virginia law will take effect that will protect the identities of nearly all parties involved in state-performed lethal injections. **HB 815** [2] provides exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act to make confidential all identifying information of producers, suppliers, compounding pharmacies, executioners, and all other individuals involved in the procurement and use of lethal injection drugs. According to the Death Penalty Clinic at the UC Berkeley School of Law [3], Virginia will become at least the 13th state with such a law, along with Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas.

Similarly, the Arkansas Supreme Court upheld the state’s lethal injection drug supplier confidentiality law [4] on June 23, 2016, stating in the majority opinion that “disclosing [identifying] information is actually detrimental to the process” of capital punishment. Others believe that public opinion might be different were it not for these secrecy laws. Judge Wendell Griffen, whose ruling in the Sixth Judicial Circuit was overruled by the Supreme Court, said of state executions that “how it’s being done now is, we’ll make sure it’s nice by making sure it’s secret so you don’t know how barbaric it is.”

These secrecy laws come at a time when many states are struggling to find sufficient drugs and suppliers to carry out lethal injections. According to the *New York Times* [6], American and European pharmaceutical companies have almost entirely ceased distribution of lethal injection drugs to the states due to business and ethical concerns. This has left some states searching for new, or in some cases old, ways to carry out future capital punishments. Some states have attempted to illegally obtain lethal injection drugs from overseas, some have considered the revival of execution methods like electric chairs and firing squads, while others have decided to temporarily suspend executions altogether.

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Tags:
**Policy Area** [7]›**Public Safety** [8]›**Justice System** [9]›**Capital Punishment** [10]