



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

STATE SENATE

September 26, 2025

The Honorable Andy Beshear
Governor of Kentucky
501 High Street, Second Floor
Frankfort, Kentucky 40602

Subject: Death Warrant of Mr. Ralph Baze

Dear Governor Beshear:

I write with respect for your office and to remind you of the solemn duty you alone hold as Governor—the final authority to carry out justice in our commonwealth.

More than 30 years ago, Sheriff Steve Bennett and Deputy Arthur Briscoe of Powell County were murdered in cold blood while serving their community. The man convicted of these crimes, Ralph Baze, has exhausted all available appeals. Kentucky juries and courts have spoken with clarity. When a jury delivers a verdict, it reflects the will of the people of Kentucky, and that verdict must be respected. The only step remaining is for you to sign the death warrant authorizing his sentence to be carried out.

I am writing to you on behalf of the families in Powell County who are still affected by the loss that Ralph Baze caused in their lives. I speak on behalf of all who are focused on closure and long-awaited justice.

Attorney General Russell Coleman has outlined how previous deficiencies in Kentucky's protocols have been corrected. The Department of Corrections has addressed the concerns that led to the decade-long pause in executions. Moreover, the federal government is committed to ensuring states have a legal path to access the drugs necessary to carry out sentences, such as that of Ralph Baze.

The families of Sheriff Bennett and Deputy Briscoe have waited far too long for closure. Justice delayed in this case is justice denied. Only you stand in the way of justice being realized. The explanations offered by your office on this matter are deeply disappointing and concerning.

Governor, I urge you to correct course and fulfill the duty that your office alone can perform. Signing this warrant is not only a matter of law but a matter of respect for victims, their families, and every Kentuckian who expects the rule of law to be upheld.

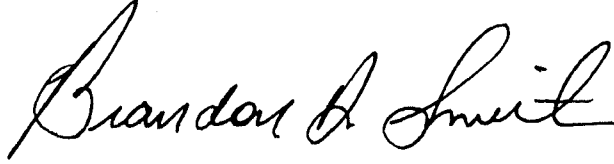
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If you work in good faith with the federal government, the Department of Corrections, and the legislature, progress can be made. The Bennett and Briscoe families deserve to sleep more peacefully at night, knowing the justice system and their government worked for them.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brandon A. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brandon" being the most prominent.

Senator Brandon Smith

Kentucky State Senate, 30th District

BS/di

CC: Attorney General Russell Coleman

Ms. Cookie Crews, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Corrections