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NEWS HERALD

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026 | NEWSHERALD.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Next steps in Pike case are uncertain



Photographs are set up in memory of Colleen Slemmer, the woman Christa Pike was convicted of murder in in 1995, on Sept. 30, the day of Pike’s was scheduled to be executed at a Tennessee prison. DENNY SIMMONS/NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN

Inmate may face a second execution attempt

Amanda Lee Myers
USA TODAY

With the astonishing news that Christa Pike is conscious, talking and making a “medically unprecedented” recovery following her botched execution, Tennessee is now facing a critical question: Will the state try to kill her again?

“Against all odds, Christa Pike is conscious, speaking, and continues to receive critical medical care,” her attorneys said in a statement on Oct. 6. “Her prognosis remains unclear but, at a minimum, we expect a long recovery.”

They said that despite “severe damage” to Pike’s arms, “she is still handcuffed and shackled to the bed.”

“She survived two complete rounds of lethal injection per Tennessee’s protocol, despite her attorneys’ warning to the state of specific challenges with her veins,” her attorneys said. “She is the only person known to have survived a complete execution attempt in the U.S. Christa is a survivor and will take recovery one day at a time.”

So far, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has not responded to repeated calls from



Tennessee death row inmate Christa Gail Pike was convicted of the murder of 19-year-old Colleen Slemmer in 1995. PROVIDED BY CHRISTA GAIL PIKE’S LEGAL TEAM

Pike’s attorneys and death penalty observers to commute her sentence to life in prison. That leaves open the possibility that Pike will face a second execution, even after her attorneys said the first attempt on Sept. 30 amounted to unconstitutionally cruel and unusual punishment.

“We’re in uncharted territory,” said Robin Maher, executive director of the nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center, which does not take a stance

on the death penalty.

“The U.S. Supreme Court has not decided whether a second execution attempt would violate the constitution since 1947,” Maher told USA TODAY. “These are questions that have never needed to be asked before and no one knows the answers.”

Tennessee was supposed to execute Pike, 50, by lethal injection on Sept. 30 for the brutal and prolonged 1995 murder of 19-year-old Colleen Slemmer. The execution failed after Pike survived two doses of pentobarbital injections and was taken to a Nashville-area hospital.

A timeline of the chaos in the death chamber compiled by USA TODAY shows that the state tried to kill Pike for over an hour before rushing to save her.

Lee hasn’t ruled out 2nd execution

The botched execution was the second in the state in four months and drew immediate criticism. Lee has ordered an independent investigation

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BCSO probes death at Airbnb

Nathan Cobb
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

PANAMA CITY BEACH – Local law enforcement officials are investigating after a man was found dead inside a parked vehicle outside of an Airbnb. According to Deputy Jake Navarro, spokesperson for the Bay County Sheriff’s Office, the agency was notified about the body at about 12:30 p.m. on Oct. 5. As of about 11 a.m. on Oct. 6, authorities were still investigating the death, but Navarro said it appears to have been a suicide.

Navarro noted the victim was a male, but he would not release any more identifying information. “Just because it’s an investigation, we’re not going to release any victim information,” he said. “It seems like this was an isolated incident.”

The Airbnb is located near Quarts Street and Sunset Avenue in unincorporated Bay County near the Panama City Beach area.

Panama City Symphony holds live audition

Tyler Orsburn
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Panama City Symphony will continue its 31st season with a Nov. 14 performance of Astor Piazzolla’s “The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires” at St. Andrew Baptist Church in Panama City.

According to a press release, the concert will feature Piazzolla’s interpretation of the four seasons through the music and rhythms of Argentine tango. The performance is scheduled for 7 p.m., with refreshments available before the concert.

They symphony said the event will also serve as a live audition for conductor and music director finalist Alex Amstel, an Argentinian-Mexican conductor who currently serves as associate conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and previously was resident conductor of Houston Grand Opera.

For more information about the symphony’s 31st season, go to PanamaCity-Symphony.org

AI leaders struggle to answer questions on risk at NYC hearing

Greta Reich
USA TODAY

Leaders from OpenAI, Meta, Anthropic and Google said they could not quantify the risks imposed by artificial intelligence in the worst-case catastrophic scenario at a New York City

Council hearing about AI on Oct. 5.

“I don’t know. I also don’t think it matters whether it’s 1% or 10% or 20% chance that something catastrophic will go wrong. None of these levels is remotely acceptable,” Morgan Dwyer, OpenAI head of policy development and operation, said in response to Council

Speaker Julie Menin’s question of how to quantify risk.

Menin said she was “incredulous at that answer” and called it “flippant, at best,” asking how the companies can know that the product is safe if they can’t measure potential risk.

Shane Cahill, Meta director of AI pol-

icy and legislation; Alice Friend, Google global director of AI and emergency policy; and Logan Graham, a leader at Anthropic, also testified during the hearing. Each emphasized their company’s commitment to safe AI.

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