

There's no excuse for inmate's painful death

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By [editorial board](#) • May 12, 2017

Let's make one thing clear from the outset.

Joshua Mulbreght and Zachary Chronister are each serving more than six years, Mulbreght for manslaughter and Chronister for assault, for the Yamhill County Jail death of Jed Hawk Myers.

But it wasn't their wanton aggression that caused Myers to suffer a long, lonely and agonizing death, leaving behind a young girl now about to turn 6. Rather, it was the wanton negligence of a dozen jail staffers, named in a \$12 million wrongful death suit filed this week on behalf of his estate.

The buck stops at the top, of course, and at the top stand Sheriff Tim Svenson and Jail Commander Jason Mosiman. We hold them equally responsible along with the control room deputies who watched Myers' death play out in full-color video over a five-hour period, ignoring his 19 desperate attempts to summon help over the intercom.

Defense attorney Mark Lawrence put it this way at Mulbreght's sentencing hearing: "This did not have to happen. Inmates were saying, 'For God's sake, take him to the hospital before he dies.'" We don't see how any reasonable person could disagree — not, at least, after watching the jail video just posted on YouTube — and 12 of them figure to be sitting in the jury box.

Myers was beaten in his E-Block cell on May 27, 2015, the day before his scheduled release from a four-day parole sanction. Five hours later, shortly after the dawn of a new day, he expired in a medical holding cell where he had been under a 30-minute watch designed to prevent just that sort of thing.

Unfortunately, the sad details are only now coming to light, almost two years later. Despite a pair of investigations and well-publicized prosecution, it took federal litigation to expose the sheriff's office role.

In the meantime, the county followed up by allowing a woman picked up after an attempted hanging to proceed to hang herself in a jail cell — a cell conveniently equipped with a corded phone. Obviously, no lessons were learned.

In the beating incident, Myers suffered a severely lacerated kidney, traumatic brain injury, broken rib and clavicle, and extensive bruising. His torn kidney caused his bladder to fill with blood, and he proceeded to urinate a considerable quantity into a stainless steel toilet, where it continued to glow cardinal red in the video for 2-1/2 hours.

But no one opened his cell door until he quit breathing. They settled for video and periodic stops at his cell peephole.

Myers, who died at 34, will never be nominated for sainthood. He'd been prosecuted for forgery, identity theft, burglary, theft, hit-and-run, attempt to elude, escape, reckless endangering and firearms violations. His demon of choice was alcohol, which he could never seem to kick.

But he didn't deserve to be beaten up in one jail cell and left to die in another, without ever being seen by a doctor. And according to the litigants, no jail personnel were ever disciplined in response, which shocks the conscience.