

# NEWS RELEASE

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**R. Andrew Murray**  
District Attorney

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## **District Attorney schedules death penalty cases**

CHARLOTTE, NC – The District Attorney's Office has notified the defendants in three (3) death penalty cases that their cases will be tried next year. The scheduling of three death penalty (capital) cases for trial, along with 25 to 30 non-death penalty murder cases, marks an aggressive approach to prosecuting murder cases in this county.

In the past ten years, the District Attorney's Office has tried four (4) capital cases. The 2012 trial schedule represents a new approach to scheduling murder cases for trial (especially capital cases) with a goal of obtaining closure for the victim's families and reducing the murder case backlog. Death Penalty cases are especially difficult to schedule because they last from six weeks to three months. Also, scheduling more trials of death penalty cases requires a reassessment of case priorities because for every capital trial that occupies a superior courtroom for weeks or months, many other shorter trials cannot be held.

Presently, there are nineteen (19) homicide cases pending in which the District Attorney's Office has elected to seek the death penalty. In five (5) of those cases the defendant has entered a plea of *not guilty*. Those five cases must be scheduled for trial. In addition, there are over fifty (50) non-death penalty homicide cases for which trials must be scheduled.

Starting this year, the District Attorney has scheduled several murder cases for trial each month. By scheduling several cases at the same time, the allotted court time will still be effectively used to obtain justice in the most heinous of crimes even if unforeseen events prevent the trial of any single case. Scheduling multiple cases also means that witnesses in all of those cases will have to be subpoenaed and ready for trial and the cases prepared.

To aid in this approach, the District Attorney has bolstered the Homicide Prosecution Team with additional members and allotted scarce courtroom resources to capital trials.

The three death penalty cases scheduled for trial during 2012 are *State vs. Andre Hampton*, *State vs. Anthony Long*, and *State vs. Reginald Johnson*.

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