



Duane Lake spent six years locked up in a jail cell in Clarksdale for a triple murder he didn't commit.

"I lost it all — my family, my marriage, my job, my career," said the 35-year-old welder. "Now I'm working, trying to get everything back. I've got to take it one day at a time."

He spent many of those days in the "dead zone" — what defense lawyers are calling the time behind bars without legal representation. He was arrested in 2015, but he wasn't indicted until two years later. Then he spent another four years in jail while awaiting trial.

A court-appointed lawyer represented him at a hearing after his arrest. Another court-appointed lawyer represented him at a hearing after his indictment.

But he had no lawyer to fight for his release, so he wound up filing his own motions for a speedy trial. He never heard anything back.

In November 2022, more than six years after he was jailed, a jury acquitted him of capital murder.