

12 Reasons to Support a Moratorium on the Death Penalty

The death penalty is hopelessly flawed. It is not fairly administered. Innocent people are condemned to die. Prosecutors cheat in trials and people are sentenced to death because of inadequate representation.

WE CALL FOR A MORATORIUM ON THE DEATH PENALTY. STOP THE KILLING UNTIL THE SYSTEM WORKS FAIRLY.

1. Murder rates are lower in U.S. states that have abolished the death penalty.
2. The death penalty costs more than life imprisonment. It costs taxpayers from \$2 to \$5 million per execution. Life in prison averages \$1 million.
3. Innocent people get executed. 416 persons have mistakenly been convicted of potentially capital crimes. Of those, 139 were sentenced to death, and 23 were actually executed. Researchers say that there are probably many more cases not yet identified.
4. The death perpetuates violent crime. As a symbol of "being tough on crime," the death penalty helps politicians get elected. Since it does not reduce violent crime, it wastes. States that have abolished the death penalty can redirect the money saved into programs that actually reduce violent crime.
5. Racism #1: Minority defendants are more likely than white defendants to be sentenced to death for the same crimes. Research into sentencing patterns shows that blacks are three to four times as likely to be sentenced to death as whites charged in similar cases.
6. Racism #2: The death penalty punishes primarily those who kill whites. Of the more than 900 persons executed in the past twelve years, nearly 81% of the cases involved white victims. Defendants whose victims were white are four to ten times as likely to be sentenced to death as those whose victims were not white.
7. Poor people get executed much more often than wealthier murderers. Over 99% of the people on death row are indigent, according to one U.S. Appeals Court judge. Persons of all income levels commit murder, but poor people are the primary recipients of the death penalty.
8. Juvenile offenders are executed. At least 160 juveniles have been sentenced to death since 1972 for crimes they committed before they were 18 years old.
9. Mentally ill people are executed. The law forbids the execution of those who are mentally ill. However, experience shows that the determination of sanity is generally made after very limited contact with the accused, often by psychiatrists employed by the prosecution. Inevitably, some who are ill are declared "sane," and fit for execution.
10. Inconsistent sentencing. Approximately 16,000 murders are committed in the U.S. each year. Only one out of 100 people convicted of murder is sentenced to death. Those sentenced to death are not necessarily those whose crimes are the worst - rather, they tend to be the poor, people of color, and those whose victims are white.
11. Support for the death penalty is decreasing. When offered a range of sentencing options, respondents in several polls have shown a preference for life imprisonment rather than execution.
12. Victims' families often oppose the death penalty. Johnnie Carter, whose 7 y/o granddaughter Katherine Busch was murdered in Yukon in 1990; Bud Welch, whose daughter Julie died in the Murrah Building bombing; Andrew Rice whose brother David died in the WTC; Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Kerry Kennedy, daughter of Robert F. Kennedy, and many others publicly oppose the death penalty. One victim's father said, "It won't bring back my son - why make two families suffer?" An Oklahoma victim's mother said, "I never felt peace until I came to accept and forgive."