

WASHINGTON'S DEATH PENALTY



**CATHOLIC
MOBILIZING
NETWORK**

ENDING THE DEATH PENALTY.
PROMOTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.

The Facts

- 9 people currently on death row
- 5 executions since 1976
- 105 executions before 1976
- Jury decides the sentence
- Life without parole is a sentencing option
- Method of execution is lethal injection
- 1 person released from death row based on evidence of innocence

Washington's Failed Legislation

Repeal bills have frequently surfaced in the legislative chambers in Washington. However, they have gone nowhere, despite a Governor imposed moratorium and a call from the Governor and Attorney General to pass repeal legislation.

2017 Legislative Session

In a press conference in early 2017, Governor Jay Inslee and Attorney General Bob Ferguson called for legislators to propose and pass legislation repealing the death penalty and in its place instituting life imprisonment without the possibility of parole as the harshest sentencing. Despite the overwhelming support, the bill went to nowhere due to political factions.

Washington's Bishops Stand Against Capital Punishment

In January of 2014, when Washington Governor Jay Inslee imposed a moratorium on all executions, the Bishops of Washington state praised the declaration by raising awareness that there needs to be "a public conversation on capital punishment..." and, "...we favor abolishing the death penalty, but also recognize the obstacles to achieving the goal...We therefore pledge our assistance by working to raise awareness among Catholic people and all people of good will about the moral and practical reasons for ending executions in our state."

For more resources:

Washington Catholic Conference:

www.thewsc.org

Washington Coalition Against the Death Penalty:

www.abolisdeathpenalty.org

WASHINGTON'S COSTLY SYSTEM

Washington is, among every other state with the death penalty, spending a tremendous amount more on retaining the failed death penalty system. In fact, replacing the death penalty with life imprisonment without the possibility of parole would save counties \$2 million annually in prosecution, defense, and witness costs alone.

MURDER VICTIMS' FAMILY MEMBERS

The death penalty does not bring loved ones back, and any "closure" that comes from an execution is often fleeting and insufficient. The pain and suffering murder victims' family members experience from the loss of their loved one is only exacerbated by long, drawn-out death penalty trials.

Countless murder victims' family members oppose the death penalty because they recognize it does not bring true healing and merely fosters vengeance.

The Church and State Speak

The Church Speaks

Evangelium Vitae

Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical on human dignity, challenges us to be "unconditionally pro-life.": "The case of someone who has done great evil. Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform." (*Evangelium Vitae*, 27)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

"If...non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity to the dignity of the person." (CCC #2267)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"Its [the death penalty] application is deeply flawed and can be irreversibly wrong, is prone to errors and is biased by factors such as race, the quality of legal representation and where the crime was committed." (*A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*, USCCB, 2005)

Words of the Popes

Pope Francis: "Rendering justice' does not mean seeking punishment for its own sake, but ensuring that the basic purpose of all punishment is the rehabilitation of the offender." *World Congress Against the Death Penalty*, June 22, 2016

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: "Society's leaders should make every effort to eliminate the death penalty and to reform the penal system in a way that ensures respect for the prisoners' human dignity." *Benin, Africa*, Nov. 19, 2011

The States Speak

Innocence

- Nationally, over 160 people have been exonerated from death row.
- For every nine executions carried out in the United States, one person has been found to be innocent.

Racial Bias

- 76% of death row defendants have been executed for killing white victims, even though African-Americans make up about half of all homicide victims.

Criminalization of Mental Illness and Intellectual Disabilities

- A study in the *Hastings Law Journal* of recent executions found that "Over half of the last one hundred executed offenders have been diagnosed with or displayed symptoms of mental illness."
- The Supreme Court banned the execution of those with intellectual disabilities but states have significantly deviated from accepted clinical methods for determining intellectual disability.

Overrepresentation of the Poor

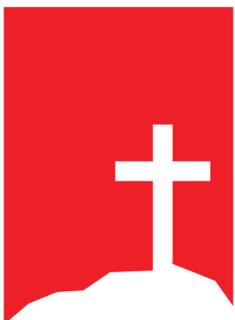
- The majority of individuals on death row could not afford their own attorney. In many cases, the appointed attorneys are overworked, underpaid, or lacking the trial experience required for death penalty cases.

Costly Public Policy

- Multiple studies have shown the cost of trial sentencing, appeals and imprisonment to be much higher in capital cases versus life in prison without parole.

Geographic Basis

- 2% of all U.S. counties have produced 56% of the U.S. death row population



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