

THE DEATH PENALTY IS AN INEFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO CRIME

Not only does the death penalty fail to deter crime, but it takes precious tax-payer dollars away from more effective programs that have actually been shown to make our communities safer, such as community-based violence interruption programs. The time and resources spent chasing a handful of executions for individuals already behind bars could be put to much better solving more crimes. The death penalty does not deter acts of violence and diverts resources from effective tools that do. Many law enforcement officials say the death penalty is only a distraction from their goal of public safety.

THE DEATH PENALTY DOESN'T DETER CRIME

- The National Research Council reviewed more than three decades of research and found no credible evidence that the death penalty deters crime.
- The certainty of being caught and punished has always proven a greater deterrent than the severity of the punishment. When a significant number of homicides routinely go unsolved, deterrence is diminished.
- A 2009 study found that 88% of the nation's top criminologists believe the death penalty is not a deterrent. Nearly two-thirds of the American people agree, according to recent polling.
- Even police officers do not believe the death penalty is an effective deterrent. Police chiefs ranked the death penalty *last* among effective ways to reduce violent crime. A full 99% said that changes such as reducing drug abuse or improving the economy were more important than the death penalty in reducing violent crime.

EXECUTIONS DON'T LOWER MURDER RATES

- A side-by-side comparison reveals that states that don't have the death penalty actually have lower murder rates than those that do. Among death penalty states, the public is also safer in states that rarely or never execute prisoners than in those that frequently execute. The South conducts the vast majority of executions, yet the murder rate there is significantly higher than in any other region in the US. The South also accounts for more law enforcement officers killed than any other region.

- Overall, police officers are safer in states that don't have the death penalty. Nineteen of the 23 most dangerous states for law enforcement are death penalty states, including 12 of the 15 states that have carried out the most executions in the U.S. since 1976.
- Twelve of the 13 safest states from deaths by gun violence don't have the death penalty. The thirteenth has a moratorium on executions.
- Sixteen of the 18 states with the highest rates of deaths by gun violence are death penalty states.
- The death penalty does not deter mass shootings. At least 80% of the deadliest mass shootings (10 or more victims) in the last 50 years have taken place in death penalty jurisdictions.
- In states that have recently repealed the death penalty, there has been no subsequent spike in murder rates. In fact, the murder rate continued to fall in New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, Illinois, Colorado, and Connecticut in the years after they repealed the death penalty.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS SPEAK OUT

- Law enforcement officials see first-hand the wide range of things that go wrong in capital cases. Even with the best intentions, police officers, lab technicians, prosecutors, judges, and witnesses can make mistakes or errors in judgment. For these reasons, some members of law enforcement now oppose the death penalty.
- Corrections officers and wardens who have participated in executions have found the experience takes a toll. From Texas to Florida to Oregon, corrections officers have experienced mental health problems, alcohol abuse, and other problems from the stress of the death penalty.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- "The death penalty is certainly not an effective law enforcement tool. Effective law enforcement and crime prevention requires precious resources that are being wasted on this ineffective and broken program. In times of fiscal crisis, the programs that fail to achieve their own goals should be the first to go."

– Ken Jones, 33-year veteran of Illinois' Cook County Police Department

- “If the millions of dollars currently spent on the death penalty were spent on investigating unsolved homicides, modernizing crime labs and expanding effective violence prevention programs, our communities would be much safer.”

– *Ray Samuels, former Police Chief of Newark, California*

- “Continuing to spend millions of dollars to take a murder defendant who has already been caught and subject him to death rather than life without parole will not prevent the next murder. Redirecting money to more vigorously apprehend and prosecute armed robbers, rapists, burglars, and those who commit gun crimes will prevent murders and save lives.”

– *Robert M. Carney, District Attorney, Schenectady, New York*

We’ve learned a lot about the death penalty in the last 40 years. It does not deter crime. It actually makes us less safe by siphoning resources from programs that do reduce crime. A growing number of law enforcement officials believe there are better ways to keep us safe. **Learn more at enddeathpenalty.org.**