



2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION AG REQUEST LEGISLATION

Repealing the Death Penalty

PROBLEM

"[The death penalty] is a system in which justice is delayed and delayed to a point where the system is broken...it isn't working anymore. It is time to move on."

- Rob McKenna

"The time has come to abolish the death penalty in Washington State."

- Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

BACKGROUND

There are many reasons to oppose the death penalty. At a press conference on January 16, 2017, a bipartisan coalition of Washington state elected leaders articulated multiple arguments for abolishing the death penalty in Washington state, including moral and religious opposition, the fact that the death penalty is disproportionately applied, and the fact that the extended period of time between sentencing and execution causes family members to relive the pain and suffering of the death of their loved ones.

What is not in dispute is that it is extraordinarily expensive to seek the death penalty in Washington state, and capital sentences are likely to be overturned on appeal.

A study conducted by the Death Penalty Information Center found that "death penalty costs can average \$10 million more per year per state than life sentences." A recent economic study in Washington found that the average cost of pursuing the death penalty is 1.4 to 1.5 times more expensive than not pursuing a capital sentence – an average difference of more than \$1 million dollars.

In 2009, the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin conducted in-depth examination of Washington's death penalty. The costs of implementing the death penalty were significant¹. In addition, appeals can take decades. Most of the death penalty cases in Washington state are concentrated in the handful of counties that can afford to prosecute them.

Even if sought, death sentences have been reversed in more than 75 percent of cases in Washington since 1997. **Where else in government are we satisfied with a 25 percent success rate for a program that costs taxpayers millions of dollars?**

More than a third of U.S. states no longer have the death penalty.

LEGISLATION (SB 6052 / HB 1935)

Eliminates the death penalty as a possible sentence for aggravated first-degree murder, and replaces it with life in prison without the possibility of parole.



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SPONSORS:

Sen. Walsh (R-16)
Sen. Carlyle (D-36)
Sen. Kuderer (D-48)
Sen. McCoy (D-38)
Sen. Pedersen (D-43)
Sen. Billig (D-3)
Sen. Dhingra (D-45)
Sen. Cleveland (D-49)
Sen. Liias (D-21)
Sen. Darneille (D-27)
Sen. Keiser (D-33)
Sen. Hunt (D-22)
Sen. Wellman (D-41)
Sen. Chase (D-32)
Sen. Miloscia (R-30)
Sen. Saldaña (D-37)
Sen. Hasegawa (D-11)

Rep. Orwall (D-33)
Rep. Nealey (R-16)
Rep. Cody (D-34)
Rep. Gregerson (D-33)
Rep. Pettigrew (D-37)
Rep. Fitzgibbon (D-34)
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Rep. Ormsby (D-3)
Rep. Pollet (D-46)
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Rep. Appleton (D-23)
Rep. Harris (R-17)
Rep. Kagi (D-32)
Rep. Frame (D-36)
Rep. Goodman (D-45)
Rep. Jinkins (D-27)
Rep. Stanford (D-1)

1: http://www.union-bulletin.com/opinion/editorials/time-to-remove-death-penalty-as-an-option/article_f587a956-df2e-11e6-8c1a-b39009603ff3.html



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SUPPORTED BY

- Washington Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty
- WA American Civil Liberties Union
- Sisters of Providence
- Quaker Voice on Washington Policy
- Unitarian Voices for Justice
- Washington State Catholic Conference
- Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation
- Washington Community Action Network
- Faith Action Network, National Council of Jewish Women
- City of Seattle
- Governor Jay Inslee
- Former AG Rob McKenna
- National Association of Social Workers – WA Chapter
- Innocence Project NW
- Seattle Times
- Walla Walla Union-Bulletin



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