



Pennsylvania Abolitionists United Against the Death Penalty

POST OFFICE BOX 58128 * PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102

PHONE: 215-724-6120 * FAX: 215-729-6189 * E-MAIL: PAUADP@aol.com

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.PA-ABOLITIONISTS.ORG

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION ALERT

URGE THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE TO DECLARE A MORATORIUM ON EXECUTIONS NOW!

About Senate Bill 25 (Death Penalty Moratorium Bill):

Senate Bill 25 would impose a temporary suspension of executions and institute a study on the use of the death penalty in Pennsylvania.

Sponsors: Senators Helfrick (R-Northumberland), Kukovich (D-Westmoreland), Kitchen (Philadelphia), Hughes (D-Philadelphia), Fumo (D-Philadelphia), Williams (D-Philadelphia), and Schwartz (Philadelphia).

What you can do to help:

Contact the Senator representing your home district and ask them:

Will you co-sponsor the moratorium bill – Senate Bill 25?

Will you support Senate Bill 25?

If they serve on the Judiciary Committee:

Will you support releasing Senate Bill 25 from the Judiciary Committee for a full vote in the Senate?

A personal visit will be most effective and it is helpful to bring other constituents. A follow-up thank you letter is very important after a visit.

If you cannot meet with your Senator, call the office or write a personal note. If you do not know who your Senator is, check <http://www2.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/findyourlegislator/find.cfm>.

Please contact Pa. Abolitionists at 1-215-724-6120 and let us know how your Senator responds.

ALSO:

Write to your local papers – letters to the Editor get attention.

Attend a Pa. Abolitionists-sponsored event and find out how you can get more involved. Remember that Moratorium Week in Pennsylvania is scheduled for 10/14-21, 2001. Information on Moratorium Week events can be found at www.pa-abolitionists.org.

Pennsylvania Death Penalty Information:

It is important to stress the problems with the death penalty policy in PENNSYLVANIA, including legal questions and questions of fairness and bias in death sentencing. Here are some facts on the death penalty in Pennsylvania:

- ❖ There are currently more than 240 persons on Pa's death row, the fourth largest death row in the nation. Since hundreds of Pa's death row inmates will exhaust their appeals in the upcoming decade, Pennsylvania is poised to become the "Texas of the North."
- ❖ A recent poll (March 2001) conducted by Madonna-Yost Public Opinion found that 72% of Pennsylvanians support a temporary suspension of the death penalty while issues of fairness are studied.
- ❖ Over 250 community, political, and religious organizations have called for a moratorium on executions in Pennsylvania including the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, the NAACP of Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania and Philadelphia Bar Associations.
- ❖ Eight city councils have adopted moratorium resolutions, representing a total population over two million: Erie, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, York, Gettysburg, Rouseville, Shippensburg, and Harrisburg.
- ❖ Over 70% of Pennsylvania's death row is composed of people of color while only 12% of Pennsylvania's general population is comprised of people of color.
- ❖ Approximately 83% of death row inmates from **Philadelphia** are African-American. African-American defendants in Philadelphia are 38% more likely to receive the death penalty than white defendants when convicted of similar crimes with similar aggravating and mitigating factors.
- ❖ Philadelphia's death row has the highest % of African-Americans in the nation.
- ❖ More than 90% of Pennsylvania's death row prisoners were too poor to afford a lawyer for their initial trial.
- ❖ After sending an individual to death row, Pennsylvania provides no funds for post-conviction legal defense, and instead, has appropriated \$500,000 to the Attorney General's office to establish an execution resource center to oppose capital appeals.
- ❖ It costs an estimated \$3 million to try a death penalty case, which is three to ten times more than the cost of life in prison.
- ❖ Philadelphia County makes up only 12.4% of Pennsylvania's population, yet it has 56% of the state's death row.
- ❖ Since 1973, 98 people in 23 states -- including 3 in Pennsylvania -- have been released from death row after evidence of their innocence was discovered.
- ❖ A Columbia University research team recently found that 65% of 4,578 death penalty appeals were marred by either poor defense representation or prosecutorial misconduct.

The system doesn't work:

On October 20, 2000, William Nieves was acquitted by a retrial jury of the 1992 murder of Eric McAiley after 8 years in prison, 6 years spent on death row. A divorce lawyer with no capital trial experience and with only \$2,500 to handle the case represented Nieves at his trial.

Nieves' retrial was delayed for three years while prosecutors – who withheld evidence in Nieves' original trial – appealed the trial court judges' decision and fought to preserve the conviction and death sentence.

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