



The Death Penalty in Kansas

Kansas already has in place an alternative to the death penalty, a sentence of life without parole. This severe sentence keeps Kansans safe from violent criminals without risking the harmful effects of the death penalty.

Since reinstating the death penalty in 1994, Kansas has sentenced 13 individuals to death.

There are currently 8 individuals facing the death penalty, and no executions have taken place since 1965.

The Death Penalty Risks Executing an Innocent Person

- Since 1973, over 140 persons wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death have been exonerated nationwide.
- DNA helped exonerate some individuals, but such evidence is not always available in murder cases.
- The same mistakes occur in Kansas. Though Kansas does not have a death row exoneration, Eddie James Lowery and Joe Jones are two examples of serious felony exonerations. They spent a combined 28 years serving sentences for crimes they did not commit.

“Once you kill the accused, you can’t really turn back the clock. If the system turns out to be wrong, as it does on occasion, saying you are sorry doesn’t do much good.”

-John Feehery, Republican strategist and pundit, who used to support the death penalty

The Death Penalty Costs More than Life Without Parole

- States with the death penalty, including Kansas, find that death penalty cases cost taxpayers much more than non-death penalty cases. A large portion of the extra cost is incurred at the initial trial phase.
- A 2009 study by the Kansas Judicial Council Death Penalty Advisory Committee found that Kansas would have real cost savings by repealing the death penalty. Capital cases can be up to 70 percent more expensive.

“In 2010, we raised the mill levy more than 2 mills specifically to cover trial costs...That expense will be crushing.”

-Osage County Commissioner, Ken Kuykendall, on the Kahler capital trial

The Death Penalty is Applied Inconsistently

- The likelihood of a person receiving a death sentence varies depending on where they live, their economic status, their gender, and their racial/ethnic background.
- In Kansas, half of the death sentences since 1994 were in Sedgwick County. A similar crime committed elsewhere in the state is less likely to receive a death sentence.

“Conservatives have every reason to believe the death penalty system is no different from any politicized, costly, inefficient, bureaucratic, government-run operation, which we conservatives know are rife with injustice. But here the end result is the end of someone’s life. In other words, it’s a government system that kills people.”

-Richard Viguerie, known as one of the creators of the modern, conservative movement

The Death Penalty Does Not Deter Violent Crime

- A 2009 Death Penalty Information Center survey of 500 police chiefs ranked the use of the death penalty LAST among tools to reduce violent crime, and the LEAST efficient use of taxpayers’ money.
- The death penalty diverts scarce resources from proven crime prevention methods, such as hiring more police officers and corrections staff.

“Quite simply, if you believe in capital punishment as a deterrent, you believe in a big lie...Does the general public really want to deal with their fear of crime by spending tax dollars on measures such as the death penalty, which over the long run will not reduce crime in any way?”

-Greg Ruff, Lieutenant with 39 years in Kansas law enforcement

The Death Penalty Fails Victims’ Families

- The death penalty ignores the real needs of victims’ families, diverting essential resources from critical services like grief counseling and support.
- Death penalty trials and appeals can last over a decade. Non-death penalty cases are usually settled at the initial trial, and a life without parole sentence begins as soon as the victims’ family leaves the courtroom.

“What I’ve discovered is a legal process that no murder victim’s family should have to endure. We already have been through enough. We deserve better than a system that forces us to go through long trials and endless appeals. The death penalty focuses an incredible amount of attention on the killers, which makes victims’ families relive the painful details of a murder over and over.”

-Neely Goen, daughter of Conroy O’Brien, Kansas State Trooper who was killed in 1978

“Make no mistake – I am a conservative, a victims’ advocate and a death penalty supporter. But my real life experience has taught me that as long as the death penalty is on the books in any form, it will continue to harm survivors. For that reason alone, it must be ended.”

-Kathleen Garcia, member of the New Jersey Death Penalty Study Commission

For more information please contact:

Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty

Mary V. Sloan, MPA | Executive Director | 785.608.7229 | mary@ksabolition.org
Maria Cuevas | Communications Coordinator | 785.235.2237 | maria@ksabolition.org
Kristin Bollig | Topeka Office | 785.235.0214 | kristin@ksabolition.org
Mike Fonkert | Kansas City Office | 913.230.6643 | mike@ksabolition.org
Ewnetu Tsegaw | Wichita Office | 316.312.3689 | ewnetu@ksabolition.org
KCADP | PO Box 2065 | Topeka KS 66601 | www.ksabolition.org