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Letters to the Editor – Example 1:

Letter: Speeding up capital punishment process leads to deadly mistakes

Posted: February 9, 2014 - 7:32pm

This country's experiment with capital punishment has been filled with mistakes. Since 1973, more than 145 individuals in the United States have been released from death row after new evidence proved a wrongful conviction. That means more than 145 times an individual came close to dying for a crime he or she may not have committed. How many more slipped through the cracks?

Despite all these mistakes, some Kansas legislators are pushing a misguided proposal that would speed up the appeal process in capital cases and would increase the likelihood of innocent individuals being put to death. What's the point? Proponents argue that it would reduce crime, yet crime statistics show that the murder rate has consistently been higher in states with the death penalty.

As a proud Republican, I find it disturbing that each year the government allocates millions of dollars to put people to death. The proposed death penalty reform in Kansas is not cheap. The fiscal note for this bill estimates that it will add more than \$1.7 million annually to the state budget. I'm fed up with so-called conservatives suddenly throwing aside all concerns about fiscal responsibility when it comes to this issue. We need principled conservatives committed to eliminating ineffective and wasteful programs in all aspects of government — including the criminal justice system.

The death penalty doesn't reduce crime and it costs too much money. Republicans and Democrats should reject costly proposals that won't fix the death penalty and instead repeal this unfortunate policy.

ISAAC BAHNEY, Lawrence

Letters to the Editor – Example 2:

Letter: Former parole board chair argues against death penalty

Posted: May 8, 2014 - 8:04pm

The recent, botched execution in Oklahoma was cruel and inhumane. This should give us all reason to pause and think about the role of capital punishment in our society.

After more than 30 years of professional experience with the Kansas Department of Corrections, including a term as the chairman of the Kansas Parole Board, I have great confidence in our correctional system and the excellent individuals tasked with protecting the citizens of Kansas.

However, I do not have confidence in the death penalty system. A study released this week that analyzed 30 years of capital punishment in the United States indicates that 1 in 25 people sentenced to death are innocent. Even one innocent person sentenced to death in Kansas, and possibly executed, is one too many.

I am glad executions are not currently happening in Kansas, especially considering all of the mistakes being made in other states. There have been more than 145 innocent individuals released after being wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death in the past 40 years. I applaud the Kansas House members who take this issue seriously, and who voted again recently to reject an effort to speed up death penalty appeals.

The state has an effective sentence for such heinous crimes as capital murder — life without the possibility of parole. Not only is it more cost effective than the death penalty, but it does not carry with it the risk of botched executions, or the death of a wrongfully convicted individual.

ROBERT SANDERS, Topeka

Letter to the Editor - Example 3:

WORD COUNT 191

The Kansas Legislature is being asked to repeal the death penalty and replace it with a mandatory sentence of life without parole for capital murder. Support for repeal of the death penalty crosses partisan lines, unites faith communities and finds persuasive arguments in unexpected quarters.

Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty cite reasonable and practical objections: 1) Wasteful and expensive, 2) Unacceptable probability of executing innocent people, 3) Failed policy for victims' families, 4) Arbitrarily and unfairly administered, 5) Doesn't improve public safety. Many conservatives question a broken system that is marked by inefficiency, inequity and inaccuracy.

Other Kansans in favor of abolition appreciate the perspectives of Dr. Allen Ault, former death row warden in Georgia, one of many officials who have testified to the traumatic impact executions have on corrections staff, themselves included

Many faith communities speak out in favor of a justice system that does not practice or threaten capital punishment. There are murder victim family members who believe that the death penalty is a false promise only prolonging the legal process and bringing sadness that the cycle of violence continues.

I encourage Kansans to be advocates for repeal.

Letter to the Editor – Example 4:

WORD COUNT 181

In 2015 the Kansas Legislature is being asked to repeal the death penalty and replace it with a mandatory sentence of life without parole for capital murder. I believe there are two good reasons to do so.

First, the death penalty is a gross misuse of resources. The cost is high, three to four times more expensive than non-death penalty cases. While a state will invest millions of dollars prosecuting one death penalty case, essential programs – like mental health services that can save lives or victim support services to assist families – are suffering cuts.

Second, the death penalty hurts victims' families when they are the most vulnerable. The legal process can prolong the trauma of murder victims' families, many kept in limbo while a high-profile case turns the defendant into a celebrity and the victim is forgotten. The state may even unintentionally disrespect some families by picking out a handful of murders as "heinous" while other cases are neglected.

For me, these are important reasons to work for abolition. I urge citizens to contact their legislators.