DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER

THE DEATH PENALTY IN 2014: YEAR END

REPORT

Media Coverage Summary

by Anne Holsinger

DPIC's **2014 Year End Report** was released on December 18, 2014, and received excellent media coverage. Over 100 unique articles appeared in at least 300 news outlets. Headlines announced the historic low numbers of executions and death sentences, and stories emphasized that these declines are part of an ongoing trend away from the death penalty. Many pieces, including a *New York Times* editorial, noted a societal shift in the death penalty debate.

News coverage of the 2014 Year End Report included stories in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Associated Press*, and *Reuters*, and in hundreds of other articles and editorials. Stories also ran on NPR, CBS Radio, NBC, and PBS.

As an example of our use of new media, *The Guardian* (which now has web traffic inside the U.S. similar to the *Washington Post*) hosted an online chat about the report with DPIC's Executive Director. Within 24 hours of the report's release, tweets about the report had been viewed over one million times. Our Facebook posts reached at least 8,500 people on December 18, and their reach has continued to grow.

The theme of the growing isolation and irrelevance of the death penalty was widely repeated in editorials and commentary. An editorial in the *Kansas City Star*, for example, chastised Missouri, a leading execution state in 2014, for "bucking this good trend" and called the death penalty, "an embarrassment to Missourians." This was echoed in editorials in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, among others. The *Tribune's* editorial was widely reprinted, both in the U.S. and internationally. Its observation that, "the more experience Americans have with [the death penalty], the less they like it," appeared in papers in Florida, California,

Massachusetts, Missouri, Canada, and Korea. Non-Profit Quarterly included the Year End Report among their "11 Biggest Non-Profit Stories of 2014," noting, "in general Americans have grown more skeptical of capital punishment."

This year, the media picked up on the message that a strong majority of states has already abandoned the death penalty. A quote from our press release was carried widely: "The relevancy of the death penalty in our criminal justice system is seriously in question when 43 out of our 50 states do not apply the ultimate sanction."

Similarly, the bolded summary in *Time* stated: "It has been a tortured year for capital punishment in the U.S., with multiple botched executions, last-minute stays, and exonerations raising questions about the nation's ability to constitutionally meet out the punishment." The *Los Angeles Times* reported: "Dieter foresees a time in the next decade when executions become so rare and confined to so few states that the Supreme Court will declare the punishment unconstitutional. 'It won't happen this year or next, but they could say it has become so unusual as to be outside the standards of decency,' he said."

DPIC's visual resources were once again a welcome extension of our Year End outreach. *The Washington Post*, the *Huffington Post,* and *Mother Jones* ran our infographics, and the ABA Journal linked to our short video summary. These items were also widely shared on social media, with the video reaching about 10,000 people on Facebook alone. A representative list of coverage follows:

TOP TIER NATIONAL MEDIA

ABA Journal	"Executions hit 20-year low in 2014; which seven states carried them out?" Dec. 18
Associated Press	"Executions, new death sentences continue to fall," Dec. 18
CBS Radio	Interviewed Richard Dieter on Dec. 17
Christian Science Monitor	"This year, US imposed fewest death sentences in four decades," Dec. 18
The Guardian	"US executes fewer prisoners, but deaths are more brutal: report," Dec. 18
The Guardian	"The state of the death penalty in the US: an expert takes your questions," Dec. 19 (live chat with Richard Dieter)
Los Angeles Times	"Capital punishment continues its decline; Only 7 states apply increasingly 'unusual' death penalty, expert notes," Dec. 18

McClatchy-Tribune News Service	“Report: Big decline in executions, death sentences,” Dec. 18
Mother Jones	"Executions Just Hit a 20-Year Low,” Dec. 18

TOP TIER NATIONAL MEDIA, cont.

MSNBC	"Executions in US at 20-year low, report finds," Dec. 18
National Law Journal	"Executions Continue Decades-Long Decline, With Exceptions," Dec. 18
NBC News	"Botched Lethal Injections Sees Executions at 20-Year Lows," Dec. 18
New York Times	"States Execute Fewest Convicts in 20 Years, Report Finds," Dec. 19
New York Times	"Shifting Politics on the Death Penalty," Jan. 5, 2015 (editorial)
New York Magazine	"Drug in Botched Oklahoma Execution Felt Like 'Liquid Fire'," Dec. 18
Newsweek	"Death Penalty Used At Lowest Rate Since 1994," Dec. 18
PBS	"Why the Death Penalty Is on the Decline," Dec. 18
Reuters	"Executions in United States at 20-year low," Dec. 18
Time	"U.S. Executions Reach a 20-Year Low," Dec. 18
US News and World Report	"Executions Hit 20-Year Low in U.S.," Dec. 18
USA Today	"Report: Executions continue to decline in U.S.," Dec. 18
Wall Street Journal	"U.S. Executions, Death Sentences Reach Multiyear Lows," Dec. 18
Washington Post	"How the death penalty continued its slow, steady decline in 2014," Dec. 18
Washington Post	"The ultimate punishment," Dec. 31

EDITORIALS, OP-EDS, AND COMMENTARY

New York Times	"Shifting Politics on the Death Penalty," Jan. 5, 2015
Washington Post	"The ultimate punishment," Dec. 31
Anniston Star (AL)	"Editorial: More death in Alabama," Dec. 30
Chicago Sun-Times	"America Turning Away From the Death Penalty," Dec. 22
Chicago Tribune (also appeared in The Californian, Eastern Express Times (PA), The Enterprise (MA), Pioneer Press (MN), Tampa Bay Times, Valley News (VT), Korea Times, Waterloo Region Record (Canada))	"The welcome decline of the death penalty," Dec. 22
Dallas Morning News	"Troublesome Texas death penalty," Dec. 28

Kansas City Star	"Instead of defying a national trend, Missouri could lead by ending the death penalty," Jan. 2, 2015

EDITORIALS, OP-EDS, AND COMMENTARY, cont.

Metro West Daily News	"Editorial: The decline of the death penalty," Dec. 24
Milford Daily News (MA)	"Our view; The decline of the death penalty," Dec. 24
The Patriot-News (PA)	"Amnesty International's Steven Hawkins on the death penalty: commentary," Jan. 6, 2015
Richmond Times-Dispatch (VA)	"Death penalty: On the way out," Jan. 5, 2015
Toledo Blade (OH)	"Deathly Silence," Jan. 1, 2015
The Virginian-Pilot	"The good, bad and ugly of 2014," Dec. 31
Washington Post (also appeared in Delaware News Journal)	"Democrats should stop worrying about the death penalty," Dec. 31

TELEVISION

EWTN News Nightly (interviewed Richard Dieter)	KJTV (Fox) Lubbock, TX (interviewed Richard Dieter)
Al Jazeera, "Inside Story with Ray Suarez" (interviewed Richard Dieter)	WCTV (CBS) Tallahassee, FL
KAUZ (CBS) Wichita Falls, TX	WFLA-TB (NBC) Tampa Bay, FL
KFDA (CBS) Amarillo, TX	WFTS-TB (ABC) Tampa Bay, FL
KLTV (ABC) Tyler, TX	WFTX-FTM (FOX) Fort Myers, FL
KMID (ABC) Odessa, TX	WINK-FTM (CBS) Fort Myers, FL
KTVT-DAL (CBS) Dallas, TX	WTLV-JAX (NBC) Jacksonville, FL
KVUE-AUS (ABC) Austin, TX	WTXL (ABC) Tallahassee, FL
KXAS-DAL (NBC) Dallas, TX	WZVN-FTM (ABC) Fort Myers, FL
YNN Austin Austin,TX	WAFF (NBC) Huntsville, AL
WAKA (CBS) Montgomery, AL	WCFT-BIRM (ABC) Birmingham, AL
KFTA (FOX) Fort Smith, AR	KHOG (ABC) Fort Smith, AR

KERO-BFL (ABC) Bakersfield, CA	KMPH-FRES (FOX) Fresno, CA
KRCK-CR (ABC) Chico/Redding, CA	News 12 CT Hartford/New Haven, CT

KTVD (MyTV) Denver, CO	WUSA-DC (CBS) Washington, DC
WGXA (FOX) Macon, GA	WJCL-SAV (ABC) Savannah, GA
WRDW (CBS) Augusta, GA	KITV-HON (ABC) Honolulu, HI
WTOC-SAV (CBS) Savannah, GA	KTBS-SHV (ABC) Shreveport, LA
WPSD (NBC) Paducah, KY	WOI-DM (ABC) Des Moines, IA
WXIN-IN (Fox) Indianapolis, IN	WJTV (CBS) Jackson, MS
WWLP-SPR (NBC) Springfield, MA	KOLR (CBS) Springfield, MO
WLBT (NBC) Jackson, MS	KQFX (FOX) Columbia, MO
KNPN St. Joseph, MO	KDAF-KC (FOX) Kansas City, MO
KRCG (CBS) Columbia, MO	KLAS-LV (CBS) Las Vegas, NV
KFBB (ABC) Great Falls, MT	WBTV-CLT (CBS) Charlotte, NC
WGRZ-BUF (NBC) Buffalo, NY	WTVD-RAL (ABC) Raleigh, NC
WTOL (CBS) Toledo, OH	WKBN (CBS) Youngstown, OH
WYTV (ABC) Youngstown, OH	WYFX (FOX) Youngstown, OH
KOKI (FOX) Tulsa, OK	WFOR-OKC (NBC) Oklahoma City, OK
WFMZ (MeTV) Philadelphia, PA	KEXI (ABC) Eugene, OR
WCSC-CHS (CBS) Charleston, SC	WPMT-HAR (FOX) Harrisburg, PA
WYFF (NBC) Greenville, SC	WMBF (NBC) Myrtle Beach, SC
WBBJ (ABC) Jackson, TN	WATE (ABC) Knoxville, TN
WMSN (FOX) Madison, WI	

TELEVISION, Cont.

WBUR Boston, MA	KFBK-AM Sacramento, CA	KLIV-AM San Francisco, CA
KOMO-AM Seattle, WA	KGMI News/Talk 790 Seattle, WA	North Carolina News Network
KGO-AM San Francisco, CA	AM 860 Portland, OR	550 AM KTSA San Antonio, TX
KRLD-AM Dallas, TX	FM News 101 KXL Portland, OR	KTRS-AM St. Louis, MO

News Radio KEX Portland, OR	WJR-AM Detroit, MI	KSL-AM Salt Lake City, UT

RADIO

Al Jazeera America	"US executions fall to 20-year low as death penalty politics shift," Dec. 31
Apex Tribune	"Death Sentences and Executions at a 20-Year Low," Dec. 18
Bio & Tech Insights	"Executions in the US Dropped to 40 year low in 2014," Dec. 17
The Crime Report	"Executions, Death Sentences Reached New Lows In U.S. This Year," Dec. 18
Daily Beast	"Death Penalty Hits 20-Year Low," Dec. 18
Frontrunner (Bulletin News Network)	"Report Finds US Executions At A 20-Year Low," Dec. 31
Gawker	"The Death Penalty Is Slowly Dying," Dec. 18
The Hill	"US executions fall to lowest in 20 years," Dec. 18
Non-Profit Quarterly	"NPQ's 11 Biggest Nonprofit Stories of 2014 and Their Implications for Our Future," Jan. 5, 2015
Progressive Pulse	"Death sentences at 40-year low; death penalty remains threat to innocents, justice," Dec. 18
Religion News Service	"Executions drop to lowest level in two decades," Dec. 19
Washington Times	"Virginia joins nationwide trend away from using death penalty," Dec. 31
The Week	"U.S. executions fell to a 20-year low in 2014," Dec. 18
UPI	"U.S. executions at 20-year low in 2014," Dec. 18
Yahoo News	"New death sentences, executions continued to drop in 2014, report says," Dec. 18

ADDITIONAL NATIONAL MEDIA and SPECIALTY PUBLICATIONS

Alabama Media Group	"Is the death penalty dying? States carry out fewer executions in 2014," Dec. 19
Bradford Today (PA)	"Death Sentences and Executions at 20-Year Lows," Dec. 18
Charlotte Post (NC)	"Another year without NC executions; Historic lows nationally," Dec. 24

Chicago Tribune	"U.S. executions continue to fall; Report points to fewer murders, more life sentences," Dec. 18
Columbus Dispatch	"Capital punishment / 2014 report; Ohio executed 1; U.S. tally dips 10%," Dec. 18
Daily Herald	"Use of capital punishment continues decline nationwide," Dec. 19
Dallas Observer	"Texas Executed 10 People in 2014, the Lowest Number Since 1996," Dec. 18
Detroit Free Press	"Use of death penalty falling in US," Dec. 18
Kansas City Star	"As U.S. executions decline, Missouri bucks the trend," Dec. 26
Las Vegas Review Journal	"Executions of prison inmates in U.S. decline to 20-year low," Dec. 19
Ledger-Enquirer (Columbus, GA)	"Report: Big decline in executions, death sentences," Dec. 18
News & Observer (Raleigh, NC)	"North Carolina juries bring three death row sentences in 2014," Dec. 18
Patch (Sarasota, FL)	"Florida 3rd in Nation for Executions," Dec. 18
Richmond Times-Dispatch	"Death penalty decline continues in the U.S.," Dec. 19
San Francisco Chronicle	"Death sentences in state drop to 14 this year, and only one in N. Cal.," Dec. 18
The State	"Report: Big decline in executions, death sentences," Dec. 18
Sun-Sentinel (FL)	"U.S. executions continue to plummet, report says; Fewer murders, more use of life without parole," Dec. 18
Uncover Michigan	"Decline in Executions and New Death Sentences," Dec. 18
Watauga Democrat (Boone, NC)	"Executions in state hit 10-year low," Dec. 31
Winston-Salem Journal (NC)	"N.C. had 3 new death sentences in '14, no executions for 8th year," Dec. 31

STATE AND REGIONAL NEWS COVERAGE

INTERNATIONAL

AFP	"Executions in US dip to 20-year low," Dec. 18

CBC News	"Executions in U.S. hit 20-year low in 2014, according to report," Dec. 18
Daily Mail	"Number of U.S. prisoners put to death falls to record 20-year low as concerns grow in wake of botched executions," Dec. 18
Deutsche Presse-Agentur	"Executions in US at a 20-year low in 2014, says group," Dec. 18
The Gulf Today	"Executions in US at '20-year low'," Dec. 18
Headline and Global News	"U.S. Death Penalty Executions at 20-year Low, Report Finds," Dec. 18
International Business Times	"Death Penalty In The US: 2014 Sees Fewest Executions In 20 Years After Outcry Over Botched Injections," Dec. 18
Legal Monitor Worldwide	"US Executions Drop to Lowest Level in Two Decades," Dec. 24
Radio New Zealand News	"US executions drop to 20-year low," Dec. 18
Sputnik News	"US Executions Down, But Cruelty Up," Dec. 18
The Star (South Africa)	"Fewest put to death in US in 20 years," Dec. 19
Toronto Star	"Eight troubling things about death penalty in U.S.," Dec. 18