DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER

THE DEATH PENALTY IN 2015: YEAR END REPORT

Media Coverage Summary

By Anne Holsinger

DPIC's **2015 Year End Report** was released on December 16, 2015, and received outstanding media coverage. More than 600 outlets carried stories. National coverage emphasized the report's theme of the death penalty declining by every measure, while many local stories featured the idea that continued use of the death penalty marked certain jurisdictions as "outliers."

News coverage of the 2015 Year End Report included stories in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Associated Press*, and in hundreds of other articles and editorials. Stories also ran on NPR, ABC Radio, CBS Radio, MSNBC (which included it throughout the day in its news crawl), and CSPAN.

A wave of editorials followed the initial coverage, including the lead editorial in December 30's *Washington Post*, which began, "'The death penalty is withering throughout most of the country,' says the Death Penalty Information Center's Robert Dunham." It drew heavily on data from the report to illustrate the declining use and isolation of the death penalty as it urged abolition. Editorials in *The Los Angeles Times* and *Sacramento Bee* harshly criticized California's Riverside County for leading the nation in death sentences. The *Los Angeles Times* said, "Are murders really so much more heinous in Riverside County than elsewhere? That's hard to imagine, and it points up a core problem with the capital punishment system: The decision on who receives a death sentence often has less to do with whether the defendant is "the worst of the worst" than it does with the proclivities of the prosecutors."

Headlines touted "historic lows," while the statistics showing a decline by three significant measures – executions, death sentences, and public support – provided a theme of long-term decline. *The Guardian* portrayed this year's numbers as signs of "the painfully slow death of the death penalty." The *Associated Press* referenced the "steady decline in death sentences" and devoted a portion of its coverage to Justice Stephen Breyer's dissent in *Glossip*

v. Gross questioning the constitutionality of capital punishment and the possibility that the Supreme Court will grant review to address this issue.

DPIC's visual resources were once again a welcome extension of our Year End outreach. Graphics from the report appeared in *The Washington Post* and *Buzzfeed News* and were broadcast on MSNBC and CSPAN.

A selection of coverage follows:

TOP TIER MEDIA

Associated Press	"Executions at lowest level since 1991," Dec. 16
The Atlantic	"A decline in executions," Dec. 16
BBC	"Executions in US 'lowest in 25 years'," Dec. 16
BuzzFeed News	"The Death Penalty, On The Decline In Use, Faced Big Questions In 2015," Dec. 16
Christian Science Monitor	"For another year, the US sees decline in executions," Dec. 16
CSPAN	Washington Journal appearance by Robert Dunham, Dec. 19
The Economist	"Who killed the death penalty?" Dec. 17
The Guardian	"Death penalty rates plunge to lowest level in the US since 1970s," Dec. 16
Huffington Post	"2015 Was A Historic Year For The Death Penalty In America," Dec. 16
Los Angeles Times	"Riverside County leading U.S. in death sentences, report says," Dec. 16
MSNBC	"America's changing relationship with death penalty," Dec. 19
NBC News	"Number of Executions, Death Sentences Dropping: Report," Dec. 16
New York Times	"Executions by States Fell in 2015, Report Says," Dec. 16
NPR	"Use of Death Penalty Continues Its Decline In The United States," Dec. 16
Reuters	"Dispute over lethal injection drugs fuels drop in U.S. executions," Dec. 16
Time	"U.S. Executions Have Hit Their Lowest Level in Two Decades," Dec. 16
USA Today	"Death sentences, executions plummeted in 2015," Dec. 16
Wall Street Journal	"Death-Penalty Use Continues to Decline in U.S.," Dec. 16
Washington Post	"The U.S. saw fewer executions and death sentences in 2015 than it has in decades," Dec. 16
Washington Times	"Death penalty lowest since 1991," Dec. 16

EDITORIALS, OP-EDS, AND COMMENTARY

Washington Post (carried in Watertown Daily Times (CT), The News Journal (DE), The Oakland Press (MI), The Morning Sun (MI), The Times of Trenton (NJ), The Columbus Dispatch (OH), The Salt Lake Tribune (UT))	"The death penalty's demise can't come soon enough," Dec. 30
Los Angeles Times	"The shame of state-sponsored killing," Dec. 22
Anniston Star (AL)	"Good trend in America about the death penalty," Dec. 17
Dallas Morning News	"Could Texas be losing its appetite for the death penalty," Dec. 30
Fort Worth Star- Telegram (TX)	"Death penalty sentences lowest in 40 years," Dec. 17
Gainesville Sun (FL)	"Florida is out of step with executions," Dec. 31
The Guardian	"Is this really the end for America's death penalty?" Dec. 19
Reading Eagle (PA)	"Editorial: It is time to abolish the death penalty in Pennsylvania," Dec. 17
Sacramento Bee	"A deadly disparity in justice," Dec. 30
Stillwater News Press (OK)	Is the death penalty dying in US?," Dec. 26

TELEVISION

CSPAN Washington Journal (interview with Robert Dunham)	MSNBC UP with Steve Kornacki
WPBF (ABC) West Palm Beach, FL	WESH-ORD (NBC) Orlando, FL
WLIO (NBC) Lima, OH	KEYC-DT2 (FOX) Mankato, MN
KTTW (FOX) Sioux Falls, SD	WSYT (FOX) Syracuse, NY
KVRR (FOX) Fargo, ND	KQDS (FOX) Duluth, MN
WFMZ (MeTV) Philadelphia, PA	WSOC-CLT (ABC) Charlotte, NC
WINK-FTM (CBS) Fort Myers, FL	KWTV-OKC (CBS) Oklahoma City, OK
WAFF (NBC) Huntsville, AL	KOAA (NBC) Colorado Springs, CO
WTOC-SAV (CBS) Savannah, GA	News 14 Triangle Raleigh, NC
WTVG (ABC) Toledo, OH	WAFB-BTR (CBS) Baton Rouge, LA
WCMH-CBO (NBC) Columbus, OH	News 14 Charlotte Charlotte, NC

WXIX-CIN (FOX) Cincinnati, OH	WTOC-SAV (CBS) Savannah, GA
WLNE-PVD (ABC) Providence, RI	KOMU (NBC) Columbia, MO
WMDT (ABC) Salisbury, MD	WICU (NBC) Erie, PA
WJRT (ABC) Flint, MI	WDFX (FOX) Dothan, AL
KGMB-HON (CBS) Honolulu, HI	KRGV (ABC) Harlingen, TX
WIS - COL (NBC) Columbia, SC	WMTV (NBC) Madison, WI
WUSA-DC (CBS) Washington, D.C.	WPTV (NBC) West Palm Beach, FL
KGTV-SD (ABC) San Diego, CA	WYZZ (FOX) Peoria, IL
News 14 Charlotte Charlotte, NC	WBTW (CBS) Myrtle Beach, SC
KUTV-SLC (CBS) Salt Lake City, UT	KMSS-SHV (FOX) Shreveport, LA
KOMO-SEA (ABC) Seattle, WA	KWTV-OKC (CBS) Oklahoma City, OK
KPRC-HOU (NBC) Houston, TX	WAVY-NFK (NBC) Norfolk, VA
WILX (NBC) Lansing, MI	KMSS-SHV (FOX) Shreveport, LA
New England Cable News Boston, MA	WDAM (NBC) Hattiesburg, MS
WPTV (NBC) West Palm Beach, FL	KTAL-SHV (NBC) Shreveport, LA
KTVT-DAL (CBS) Dallas, TX	WHAM-ROC (ABC) Rochester, NY

RADIO

News/Talk 92.3 KTAR Phoenix, AZ	KABC-AM Los Angeles, CA	KCSB-FM Santa Barbara, CA
WOAI-AM San Antonio, TX	KFI AM Los Angeles, CA	News/Talk 570 Syracuse, NY
Newsradio 740 KTRH Houston, TX	KRLD-AM Dallas, TX	KLBJ-AM Austin, TX
WSB-AM Atlanta, GA	WOAI-AM San Antonio, TX	WBAP-AM Dallas, TX
News Radio 1330 Green Bay, WI	KIRO-AM Seattle, WA	KFYI-AM Phoenix, AZ
KOGO-AM San Diego, CA	99.1 FM Talk Reno, NV	WWJ-AM Detroit, MI
NewsRadio 680 WPTF Raleigh, NC	WBBM-AM Chicago, IL	WTOP-DC Washington, D.C.
KDKA-AM Pittsburgh, PA	Delaware 105.9 Salisbury, MD	550 AM KTSA San Antonio, TX
WNEW-FM Washington, D.C.	KRLD-AM Dallas, TX	KUOW-FM Seattle, WA
KLIV-AM San Francisco, CA	WYPR-FM Baltimore, MD	WUNC-FM Raleigh, NC

WNYC-FM New York, NY	WHYY Philadelphia, PA	WESA-FM Pittsburgh, PA
WEAA-FM Baltimore, MD	WDDE 91.1 FM Philadelphia, PA	WBUR Boston, MA
WBFO-FM Buffalo, NY	WBEZ-FM Chicago, IL	WAMU-FM Washington, D.C.
News Radio KEX Portland, OR	News KNPR Las Vegas, NV	KUT 90.5 Austin, TX
Milwaukee (WI) Public Radio	KSL-AM Salt Lake City, UT	KQED-FM San Francisco, CA
KPLU-FM Seattle, WA	KPCC-FM Los Angeles, CA	KOPB-FM Portland, OR
KNOW-FM Minneapolis, MN	KOA-AM Denver, CO	KCRW-FM Los Angeles, CA
KOMO-AM Seattle, WA	Classical 89.5 Salisbury, MD	101.9 WDET Detroit, MI
WLW-AM Cincinnati, OH	WDBO-FM Orlando, FL	WBAL-AM Baltimore, MD
Talk 1300 Albany, NY	KTRS-AM St. Louis, MO	KSL-AM Salt Lake City, UT
Capital Public Radio Sacramento, CA	KGMI News/Talk 790 Seattle, WA	KGMI News/Talk 790 Seattle, WA

SPECIALTY AND LOCAL COVERAGE

Atlanta Headlines Examiner	"Number of executions continued to drop in 2015, report reveals," Dec. 22
Birmingham News (AL)	"Report: Alabama 'outlier' in national death sentence decline," Dec. 16
Bloomberg BNA: Criminal Law Reporter	"Executions at Lowest Levels Since 1991," Dec. 22
Catholic News Agency	"Executions in the US are falling dramatically. Why?" Jan. 7
Cleveland Plain Dealer (OH)	"Executions in U.S. reach lowest number since 1991; Ohio had none in 2015," Dec. 16
Columbus Dispatch (OH)	"Executions in U.S. fewest since 1991, report shows," Dec. 16
Daily Progress (VA)	"Executions, death sentences continue to drop in U.S.," Dec. 16
Daily Report (GA)	"'Life Without Parole' Leads to Shrinking Death Penalty Pipeline," Dec. 16
Dallas Morning News	"Reports: New death sentences in Texas hit record low in 2015," Dec. 16
Dayton Daily News (OH)	"Death sentences down by a third," Dec. 16
Desert Sun (CA)	"Riverside County leads the nation in death sentences," Dec. 16
Houston Chronicle (TX)	"Houston Death penalty foes optimistic as executions drop," Dec. 16

Huntsville Times (AL)	"Alabama an outlier as death sentences decline nationwide," Dec. 20
Miami Herald (also carried in Orlando Sentinel, Tampa Bay Times)	"Study: Florida remains 'outlier,' as death penalty declines nationwide," Dec. 15
Omaha World Herald (NE)	"State's execution roadblocks won't go away, Nebraska lawmaker says," Dec. 16
Press Enterprise (CA)	"Riverside County leads in death sentences," Dec. 17
Reading Eagle (PA)	"Executions continue to dip across the country," Dec. 17
Richmond Times Dispatch (VA)	"Across the nation, executions and death sentences continue to decline," Dec. 16
Texas Tribune	"New Death Sentences in Texas Drop to 40-Year Low," Dec. 16
Tulsa World (OK)	"Report: Oklahoma in line with decline in use of capital punishment nationwide," Dec. 16
Valley News (NH)	"US death sentences, executions lower in 2015," Dec. 17
VICE News	"Is America Closer to Getting Rid of the Death Penalty?," Dec. 16

INTERNATIONAL

AFP	"US executions at lowest level in quarter century: report," Dec. 16
BBC News Magazine	"Why is one county handing down one of six US death sentences?" Dec. 23
Legal Monitor Worldwide	"In the U.S. Lethal injection executions continuing to decline due to court disputes over controversial drug used in death sentences," Dec. 23
Voice of America	"Death Penalty Use Drops Sharply in US: Study," Dec. 16
Russia Today	"Executions on decline in US, death penalty sentences hit record low," Dec. 16
UPI	"Use of death penalty at lowest level since 1991," Dec. 16
Deutsche Presse-Agentur	"US executions drop to lowest level in nearly 25 years," Dec. 16
Irish Times	"US executions fall to 28, lowest level in 24 years, report shows," Dec. 17