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# DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER

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## **Statement by DPIC Executive Director Robert Dunham Concerning Federal Proposal for Reduced Appellate Review of Murders Involving Mass Shootings or Deaths of Police Officers**

“The federal Department of Justice has recently indicated that it plans to present Congress with legislation to curtail appellate review of murder cases involving mass shootings or the deaths of law enforcement officers as a means of expediting executions in those cases.

“With regard to mass shootings, the real issue facing America is how to stop them. Expediting executions will do nothing to address the epidemic of mass shootings in this country. Most of the mass shootings have occurred in death-penalty states where such killings are already a capital offense, and the death penalty has done absolutely nothing to stop them. Focusing on the death penalty as a response to mass shootings needlessly diverts energy and attention from potential remedies the federal government could undertake to meaningfully address that important problem.

“With regard to the killings of law enforcement officers, DPIC’s analysis of three decades of FBI homicide data has found no evidence that the death penalty has any effect on the rate at which officers are killed. Fortunately, over the past decade, the number of police officers killed in the line of duty has remained extremely low across the country. The data show that over the past 30 years, police officers have been killed at higher rates in states that have the death penalty than in states that don’t. They also show that the death-penalty states that have carried out the fewest executions since the 1970s are also the states with the lowest rates of law enforcement victimization. Moreover, trends in the rates at which police officers are killed have been similar in states that had the death penalty throughout this time period, states that never had the death penalty, and states that have recently abolished it.

“Finally, making the appeals process even less reliable is not a rational response to serious murder cases. Our review of death-row exonerations reveals that at least seven people who were wrongly convicted and sentenced to death in cases in which police officers were killed have been exonerated since 1973. Most wrongful capital murder convictions are the product of police or prosecutorial misconduct, and law enforcement have the greatest incentive to cut corners or manipulate evidence in cases involving the deaths of their colleagues. In the most serious murder cases, greater transparency and more thorough appellate review — not appellate rubberstamping of questionable trial proceedings — is necessary.”

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**Board of Directors**  
Anthony Amsterdam

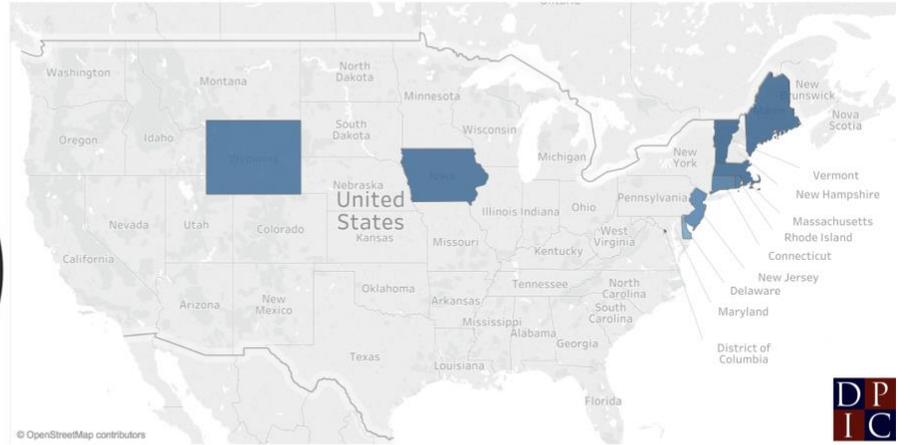
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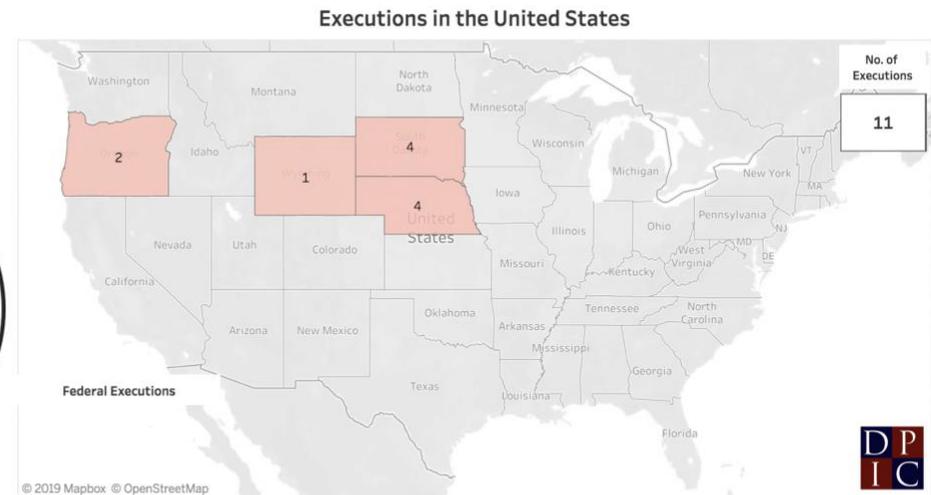
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Do executions make police safer?



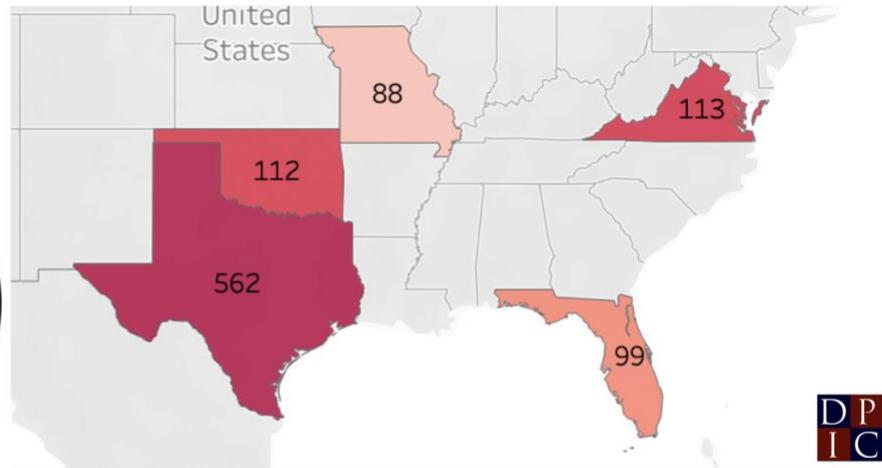
- **Eight of the 9 safest states for law enforcement don't have the death penalty: Vermont, Iowa, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, and Massachusetts. Wyoming has the death penalty, but has no one on death row.**

Do executions make police safer?



- **The four death-penalty states with the lowest law enforcement victimization rate — Wyoming, Oregon, Nebraska, and South Dakota — each have executed fewer than one prisoner per decade since 1976.**

Do executions make police safer?



With 1 being the state with the lowest police-victim murder rate and 50 being the highest, here is where the five states with the most executions since 1976 rank:  
 1. Texas ranks 40. 2. Virginia ranks 27. 3. Oklahoma ranks 28.  
 4. Florida ranks 26. 5. Missouri ranks 33.

Officer Murder Rates (1987-2017)					
Category of State	Murder Rate/1,000,000 Population	Murder Rate in Comparison to:			
		United States	Death Penalty States	Non-Death Penalty States	Transitional States
United States	0.190	X	1.05 times lower	1.19 times higher	1.46 times higher
Death Penalty States	0.210	1.05 times higher	X	1.31 times higher	1.62 times lower
Non-Death Penalty States	0.160	1.19 times lower	1.31 times lower	X	1.23 times higher
Transitional States	0.130	1.46 times lower	1.62 times lower	1.23 times lower	X



“Transitional States” are those states that abolished the death penalty between the years 2000 and 2017.