



Death Penalty Information Center

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CONNECTICUT SENATE NEAR CRUCIAL VOTE ON BILL TO REPEAL THE DEATH PENALTY

State Poised to Become Fifth State in Five Years to Abolish Capital Punishment

WASHINGTON, DC – As early as tomorrow, the Connecticut Senate is expected to vote on a bill to repeal the state's death penalty and replace it with life without parole. If signed into law, Connecticut would become the fifth state in five years to abandon capital punishment. The bill appears likely to pass the Connecticut House of Representatives and Governor Dannel Malloy has pledged to sign the bill into law.

"The upcoming Connecticut vote is in line with a clear trend away from the use of capital punishment across the country. As significant concerns about executing the innocent, the high cost of the death penalty and its unfair application continue to grow, more states are turning to alternative punishments," said Richard Dieter, Executive Director of the Death Penalty Information Center.

For key facts on the death penalty nationwide and quotes from Connecticut experts in law enforcement, policymakers and victims' families, see "Death Penalty At A Glance" <www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/DPAtAGlance.pdf>

Murder victims' families and friends are among the strongest supporters of the repeal. A letter signed by 179 Connecticut murder victims' families stated, "Our direct experiences with the criminal justice system and struggling with grief have led us all to the same conclusion: Connecticut's death penalty fails victims' families. ... In Connecticut, the death penalty is a false promise that goes unfulfilled, leaving victims' families frustrated and angry after years of fighting the legal system. And as the state hangs onto this broken system, it wastes millions of dollars that could go toward much needed victims' services."

Connecticut's Office of Fiscal Analysis estimated that the state pays \$5 million a year for a death penalty system that has largely been in disuse. The Office estimated that repealing the death penalty will immediately save the state \$850,000 each year for the next two fiscal years, and that savings eventually would grow to \$5 million a year. Since 1976, the state has carried out only one execution. In 2005, Michael Ross was executed by lethal injection after giving up his appeals. Since 1976, 15 death sentences have

been handed down by Connecticut juries. The death penalty repeal bill is prospective and will not affect the sentences of the 11 inmates currently on the state's death row.

A repeal of the death penalty in Connecticut would be in line with a broader trend away from the death penalty around the country:

- New death sentences dropped to 78 in 2011, representing a dramatic 75% decline since 1996, when 315 individuals were sentenced to death. It was the first time since 1976 that the country produced fewer than 100 death sentences in a single year. Executions have also steadily decreased nationwide, with 43 in 2011 and 46 in 2010, representing a 56% decline since 1999, when there were 98.
- In recent years, Illinois, New Mexico and New Jersey voted to abolish the death penalty. New York's death penalty law was declared unconstitutional in 2004, and the legislature has repeatedly rejected attempts to reinstate capital punishment. Other state legislatures are considering bills to abolish the death penalty.

To speak with Richard Dieter, Executive Director of the Death Penalty Information Center, about the costs, trends, or declining national use of the death penalty, please contact Elaine de Leon at 202-289-2275 or edeleon@deathpenaltyinfo.org.

For more information specific to Connecticut, contact Ben Jones, Executive Director of the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty, at 860-231-1489 or ben.jones@cnadp.org, or Shari Silberstein, Executive Director of Equal Justice USA, at 718-801-8942 or sharis@ejusa.org.

The Death Penalty Information Center (www.deathpenaltyinfo.org) is a non-profit organization serving the media and the public with analysis and information on issues concerning capital punishment. DPIC was founded in 1990 and prepares in-depth reports, issues press releases, conducts briefings for the media, and serves as a resource to those working on this issue.

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