



Replace the Death Penalty with Life in Prison Without Parole

The death penalty has failed Washington as a public policy. It is very costly, does not provide swift and certain justice, does not deter crime, and is not applied evenly or fairly. Instead of trying to fix an unfixable system, the legislature should replace it with a life sentence that includes a work requirement so restitution can go to victims' families and no possibility of parole.

Seeking the Death Penalty Is Very Expensive, Costing Much More than Life Without Parole

The risk of executing an innocent person means Washington's death penalty system must have safeguards. When a death sentence is sought, state and local governments must commit additional resources to investigation, case preparation, jury selection, trial, sentencing, and appellate review. A rigorous study by Seattle University criminologists found the average total costs to the justice system related to pursuit of the death penalty were over \$1 million more per case than in similar cases when the death penalty was not sought. Two current King County death penalty cases have already cost \$12,000,000 just in trial preparation—before the trial itself, sentencing, or mandatory appeals.

The Death Penalty Does Not Provide Swift and Certain Justice

Victims' families and the public need justice to be swift and sure. The death penalty is neither. Capital cases take far longer than cases where the death penalty is not sought, and can prolong the pain of victims' family members. The public focus is on the perpetrators, turning them into media celebrities while the needs of family members are forgotten. And pursuing the death penalty has not proven to be

effective—since its reinstatement in Washington in 1981, nearly 80 percent of death sentences have been overturned in cases that reached final disposition.

The Death Penalty Does Not Deter Crime

Scientific studies demonstrate that capital punishment does not deter people from committing crimes more than long sentences, and law enforcement shares this consensus. People who commit murder either do so without thinking of the consequences or believe that they will not be caught. States with the death penalty do not generally have lower murder rates. Replacing the death penalty with life without parole would allow Washington to redirect resources to proven crime-reduction strategies and to the needs of victims' families.

The Death Penalty Is Applied Unequally

Our criminal justice system should treat all people equally, regardless of where they live. Yet the death penalty is applied unevenly in our state. A man who murdered one woman was put to death, while a man who was convicted of murdering 49 women was sentenced to life in prison. Many counties cannot afford to pursue the death penalty, so where a crime occurred unfairly influences whether or not the death penalty is sought. In fact, in recent years only King and Pierce Counties have had the resources to seek the death penalty.

Replace the Death Penalty

Such an expensive, ineffective, and arbitrary system cannot be fixed. Our failed death penalty system should be replaced with life in prison, work for restitution and no parole.