



NO Death Penalty WI

For Immediate Release
October 23, 2006

Contact: Sachin Chheda
414-412-6099

Death Penalty Referendum Sponsor Admits DNA Clause is a "Bait and Switch" Tactic

Sen. Alan Lasee, the state's lead sponsor of the death penalty referendum, admitted yesterday that the advisory referendum on the November 7 ballot is intended to be a "bait and switch."

The October 22nd edition of the *Wisconsin State Journal* included this passage about Sen. Lasee's motives:

Don't take it literally

Sen. Alan Lasee, R-De Pere, the referendum's lead sponsor, cautioned against reading too much into the resolution's wording.

Lasee said the ballot question with its DNA clause is meant to poll voters on a general concept - how would they feel about the death penalty if safeguards could be built in to avoid convicting innocent people? It has never been his intent to limit the death penalty to convictions involving DNA evidence, he said. He included the DNA clause to defang opponents.

"It was my hope that this would dispel some of the fence-sitters from saying that the sky is falling and that someone is going to be wrongly convicted," he said.

Asked how seriously voters should take the resolution's language, Lasee said, "Voters can read into or out of it whatever they want. The bottom line is, **'Should the death penalty be reinstated, with or without DNA testing?'**"

"His admission lets Wisconsin voters know that the referendum is as politically motivated, misleading, and dishonest as we've been saying it is," said Sachin Chheda, campaign director for No Death Penalty Wisconsin.

Voters are being asked on the November ballot whether or not the state should reinstate the death penalty as a punishment option in cases of first-degree intentional homicide, if the conviction "is supported by DNA evidence."

"The reason the 'DNA language' was added to the referendum is that all good-hearted Wisconsin citizens want to ensure that no innocent people would be put to death," said Chheda. **"Even the most hard-core supporters of the death penalty recognize that."**

-more-

-continued-

“If we were to bring the death penalty back to our state after 150 years, one would think it would be a priority to be sure that the innocent are protected,” continued Chheda, **“Senator Lasee has again demonstrated that death penalty proponents need to play dishonest political games to try and trick the people of Wisconsin to support their extreme point of view. By admitting again that he is unconcerned about the chance that innocent people would die, Sen. Lasee has given Wisconsin voters yet another reason to vote ‘no.’”**

According to the Death Penalty Information Center, a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization, 123 men have been proven innocent and walked off death row since 1972, after initially being arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. About 1,047 people have been executed – which means that of those cases that have reached final disposition, over 11 percent, more than one in 10, have involved an innocent person.

“We are confident that Wisconsin citizens will see through the dishonest rhetoric and political games of Senator Lasee and the leadership of the Wisconsin State Legislature and vote no this fall,” said Chheda.

-30-

No Death Penalty Wisconsin is a coalition of organizations and individual leaders dedicated to educating the people of Wisconsin about the fiscal and moral cost of re-establishing the death penalty. Participants include the Wisconsin Council of Churches, Wisconsin Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Amnesty International, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Peace Action Wisconsin, the District Attorneys from Wisconsin’s two largest counties, and many others.