

FACT SHEET: THE DEATH PENALTY DOES NOT DETER CRIME

The Death Penalty Has No Beneficial Effect On Murder Rates

“I have inquired for most of my adult life about studies that might show that the death penalty is a deterrent. And I have not seen any research that would substantiate that point.”

– Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, January 21, 2000

- The death penalty does not make communities safer. Wisconsin, which has not had the death penalty for 150 years, has a murder rate that is half that of states like Texas and Florida that use the death penalty frequently.
- The murder rate in Canada has *dropped by 27%* since the death penalty was abolished in that country in 1976. (Amnesty International)
- A New York Times survey demonstrated that the homicide rate in states *with* capital punishment have been *48% to 101% higher* than those *without* the death penalty. (Raymond Bonner and Ford Fessenden, “Absence of Executions,” New York Times, September 22, 2000)

Those Who Commit Murder Do Not Consider the Consequences Of Their Actions

“I am not convinced that capital punishment, in and of itself, is a deterrent to crime because most people do not think about the death penalty before they commit a violent or capital crime.”

– Willie L. Williams, Police Chief, Los Angeles, CA

- Most people who commit murders either do not expect to be caught or do not carefully weigh the differences between a possible execution and life in prison before they act.

Authorities Recognize That Capital Punishment Does Not Deter Crime

“Take it from someone who has spent a career in federal and state law enforcement, enacting the death penalty...would be a grave mistake. Prosecutors must reveal the dirty little secret they too often share only among themselves: The death penalty actually hinders the fight against crime.”

– Robert M. Morgenthau, District Attorney, Manhattan, NY

- 84% of current and former presidents of the country’s top academic criminological societies *reject* the notion that research shows any deterrent effect from the death penalty. (Michael L. Radelet, Ronald L. Akers, Northern Illinois University)
- *2 out of every 3* law enforcement officers do *not* believe that capital punishment decreases the rate of homicides. (Death Penalty Information Center)