



WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

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Wisconsin doesn't need the death penalty

By Sachin Chheda, Executive Director, Wisconsin Coalition Against the Death Penalty

In recent days, death penalty proponents have claimed that only partisan politics stands in the way of Wisconsin reinstating the death penalty after 150 years. But that ignores trends that show the country, and the world, are moving in a different direction.

Last week, we saw the release of the 124th man falsely convicted of a capital crime and subsequently exonerated. Curtis McCarthy didn't commit the crime for which he spent over 20 years in jail, most of which included a guillotine hanging over his head.¹

McCarthy, an Oklahoma man who was falsely convicted of murder in 1986, has been released from death row following a judge's refusal to allow a third successive indictment against the man on the same charges. The case had been thrown out twice before due to lack of evidence.

And late last week, a New Jersey State Senate committee, in a bipartisan 8-2 vote, approved a bill that would end that state's failed death penalty experiment.² The death penalty statute in New Jersey has cost their taxpayers more than \$250 million, and hasn't brought closure to a single family's suffering.

The measure currently working its way through their state legislature would make New Jersey the first state in the country to legislatively repeal the death penalty since the US Supreme Court allowed the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976.

This has relevance here in our state, because Wisconsin doesn't need the agony of innocents like Curtis McCarthy facing the firing squad. A recent report from the National Coalition Against the Death Penalty noted that there are clearly some innocent people killed by the state for crimes they did not commit.³ Surely, we don't want the innocent killed in our name.

And, we don't need to follow New Jersey's example and squander millions of tax dollars for political reasons. We can respond to victims' families' pain by ensuring that the guilty go to prison for life with no chance of parole, and we can ensure there are fewer victims by directing resources to police, prosecutors, and crime prevention programs.

The death penalty is wrong for Wisconsin. It costs too much, it risks killing the innocent, it doesn't deter crime, and it's morally abhorrent.

¹ See www.innocenceproject.org/Content/575.php | ² See <http://tinyurl.com/3cfsr7> | ³ See www.innocentandexecuted.org

The Wisconsin Coalition Against the Death Penalty includes organizations and individual leaders dedicated to educating the people of Wisconsin about the moral and fiscal danger inherent in utilization of the death penalty. Participants include law enforcement officials, family members of murder victims, public interest organizations, faith groups, and many others.