



Know the Facts!

NO death penalty in Wisconsin

The death penalty defies international human rights standards.

Nearly two thirds of the countries in the world – 125 – have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Wisconsin abolished the death penalty in 1853.

The death penalty claims innocent lives.

Since 1973, more than 120 people have been released from death rows throughout the United States due to evidence of their wrongful conviction. In this same time period, more than 1,000 people have been executed. Investigations are currently underway in Texas and Missouri into the possibility that four innocent men were executed.

The death penalty cannot be perfected by DNA evidence.

Out of the 123 people who have been released from death row, DNA evidence played a substantial role in establishing innocence in just 14 cases. According to the Innocence Project, "DNA testing is a powerful tool for catching and correcting these mistakes, but it not a panacea for what ails the criminal justice system. Its scope is limited to the few individual cases in which biological evidence is available, can be tested, and is connected to the crime. Even in those cases, the biological evidence is often reported lost or destroyed, or is too degraded to get a conclusive result." Serious mistakes have been made by forensic laboratories in their testing processes. DNA testing is only as good as the knowledge base and skills of those using it.

The death penalty is racially biased.

Since 1977, the overwhelming majority of death row defendants (80%) have been executed for crimes involving white victims, even though African-Americans make up about half of all homicide victims.

The death penalty is not a deterrent.

A September 2000 *New York Times* survey found that during the last 20 years, the homicide rate in states with the death penalty has been 48 to 101% higher than the rate in states without the death penalty. Wisconsin is among those states whose homicide rate is lower than the national average.

The death penalty costs more and diverts resources from genuine crime control and meaningful victims' services.

The greatest costs associated with the death penalty occur prior to and during trial, not in post-conviction proceedings. Even if all post-conviction proceedings (appeals) were abolished, the death penalty would still be more expensive than alternative sentences. Spending money on the death penalty system means taking it away from education and rehabilitation, drug treatment programs, and other social services.

The death penalty is arbitrary and unfair.

95% of death row inmates cannot afford their own attorney. Local politics, the location of the crime, plea bargaining, and pure chance affect the process and make it a lottery of who lives and dies.

For more information on each of these issues, go to www.amnestyusa.org/abolish/. For more information on Wisconsin, go to www.amnestyusa.org/abolish/wisconsin/.