



CALL FOR FAITH LEADERS TO SIGN STATEMENT OPPOSING THE DEATH PENALTY

Religious faith and moral reasoning are two of the strongest reasons to oppose the death penalty. Values such as mercy, forgiveness, and support for all life dominate religious discussions of the issue.

Although individual members of different faiths vary in their thinking about the death penalty, most mainstream religious denominations have official statements opposing the death penalty. The Death Penalty Information Center and People of Faith Against the Death Penalty provide listings of those statements on their websites. Visit www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/religion-and-death-penalty or www.pfadp.org and click on the *Faith in Action* tab. Delaware Citizens Opposed to the Death Penalty has added links to Faith Resources under its *Internet Links* tab on our website.

This year, leaders of Muslim, Jewish and Christian congregations in Connecticut, Texas, Georgia, and Mississippi have collectively spoken out in opposition to

the death penalty, calling on legislators to abolish capital punishment in their states.

In keeping with those efforts, Delaware Citizens Opposed to the Death Penalty has prepared an *Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty*. We are encouraging local faith leaders to sign the statement and allow their names and affiliations to be published on the DCODP website. The statement appears on page 2 of this newsletter. It is also available for download on the DCODP website page <http://enddeathpenaltyde.org/InterfaithStatement.html>.

If you are a faith leader, you can help by submitting a signed copy of the statement to DCODP. If you are not a faith leader, please talk to the leader of your faith community to see if he or she is willing to sign and to demonstrate his or her personal opposition to the death penalty.

Death Penalty Still Active in Delaware

Because we haven't had an execution in Delaware since Brian Steckel was executed in November 2005, it is easy to forget that Delaware's machinery of death is still very active.

There are currently 18 men on death row in Delaware. Two may be facing execution within months. Robert Gattis, who was sentenced to death in 1992 for the murder of his girlfriend Shirley Slay, has exhausted his appeals. Shannon Johnson, who was sentenced to death in 2008 for the murder of Cameron Hamlin, has waived his appeals. The results of a psychological evaluation will play a role in determining whether or not he is executed.

Other defendants in recent trials also face the death penalty. In

February, a majority of jurors recommended the death penalty for Derrick Powell, who was convicted of the murder of Georgetown Police Patrolman Chad Spicer. It is noteworthy that only seven of the 12 jurors voted for the death penalty. Superior Court Judge Henley T. Graves is expected to make a sentencing decision by May 20th.

Leslie Smalls was convicted in April of the murder of 78-year-old June McCarson. The jurors unanimously recommended the death penalty. Superior Court Judge Richard F. Stokes will issue a sentence.

James E. Cook, Jr. is awaiting a retrial where he is likely to face the death penalty again. He was convicted and sentenced to death

in 2005 for the murder of college student Lindsey Bonistall, but the conviction and sentence were overturned in 2009 because defense attorneys argued against his wishes that he was guilty but mentally ill. Cooke's retrial had been scheduled for February but was postponed after his lawyers were dismissed.

Events

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| 6/4 | DCODP table at Newark Nite
4-8:30pm. Main Street, Newark |
| 6/8 | DCODP Monthly Meeting
6:30 to 8pm. Pacem in Terris,
1304 N. Rodney St. Wilmington |
| 7/13 | DCODP Monthly Meeting
6:30 to 8pm. Pacem in Terris,
1304 N. Rodney St. Wilmington |



Delaware Citizens Opposed to the Death Penalty Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty The Religious Community Calls for Repeal of the Death Penalty

As faith leaders throughout Delaware, we stand united against the continued use of capital punishment in our state. And we do not stand alone. The majority of religious communities nationwide oppose the death penalty as a violation of human rights and a perpetuation of violence in our society.

The following national religious groups have made statements in opposition to the death penalty:

American Baptist Church in the U.S.A.	The Moravian Church in America
The American Jewish Committee	National Council of Churches of Christ
The Bruderhoff Communities	Orthodox Church in America
Central Conference of American Rabbis	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	The Rabbinical Assembly
Church of the Brethren	Reformed Church in America
Church Women United	Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
The Episcopal Church	of Latter Day Saints
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America	Union for Reform Judaism
Fellowship of Reconciliation	Unitarian Universalist Association
Friends United Meeting	United Church of Christ
The General Association of American Baptists	The United Methodist Church
General Conference Mennonite Church	U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

As people of faith, we support a justice system that is both humane and restorative. We uphold the victims of violent crime and their family members in their grief and suffering and promote measures that will facilitate their healing.

We are greatly disturbed by the presence of violence in our communities. As ministers to many of our greatest societal problems, we believe the state must consider solutions to violent crime that address our communities' need for healing not vengeance.

In the name of justice, mercy, and peace, we oppose the death penalty.

Sincerely,

Signature	Printed Name	Title	Affiliation/Congregation/City *
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Date	Phone	Email Address
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____ Please initial here if we can release your name and religious affiliation publicly as an opponent of the death penalty.

*Affiliation listed for identification purposes only

Send this information to DCODP1@gmail.com or DCODP, 1304 N. Rodney Street, Wilmington, DE 19806-4227.

The Broken Machinery of Death

The following New York Times editorial was published March 18, 2011.

The Drug Enforcement Administration seized Georgia's sodium thiopental supply this week, after a complaint that the sedative used in the three-drug protocol for execution by lethal injection was imported illegally. The American producer of sodium thiopental stopped making it and the complaint says the purchase of it from an unlicensed British supplier calls into question "the legality and integrity" of how Georgia administers injections.

Texas's supply is running out and it has now announced that, following the lead of Oklahoma, it will switch to the use of pentobarbital as the sedative in a three-drug protocol for executions. Ohio has switched to a one-drug protocol using pentobarbital as the sole drug. In none of these states have scientific studies been done ensuring that this drug will meet the Supreme Court's requirement that executions not cause severe pain.

The death penalty is capricious, discriminatory and barbaric. The shortage of sodium thiopental has stripped what Justice Harry Blackmun called "the machinery of death" of even a cloak of scientifically based reliability.

We were unpersuaded when the court, by a highly fractured 7-to-2 vote in *Baze v. Rees* in 2008, upheld the death penalty and the three-drug protocol used by almost all states. It said that the manner in which the State of Kentucky administered it did not pose an unconstitutional risk that someone being put to death would suffer pain that was severe yet undetectable.

Chief Justice John Roberts argued then that the court could make that finding because of an extensive trial record about the use of sodium thiopental. There is far less of a record for the one-drug protocol, which should raise serious doubts about its constitutionality, even with this court.

When Illinois joined New Jersey and New Mexico this month as the third state to abolish the death penalty in the last four years, it made the choice compelled by a long record of judicial abuses, false convictions and other fundamental problems. That should be enough for all states to abandon the penalty once and for all.

**Delaware's death row now holds 18 men.
By race, it has 9 black, 6 white, and 3 Latino men.**

Illinois Repeals Death Penalty

Excerpted from an article by Dave McKinney and Stephen Di Benedetto in the Chicago Sun-Times, April 11, 2011.

Acting on perhaps the most significant issue he will ever face, [on April, 11, 2011,] Gov. Quinn signed landmark legislation to repeal the state's "seriously broken" death penalty and then commuted the death sentences of the 15 men on Death Row.

"We cannot have a death penalty system in our state that kills innocent people," Quinn said. "Unfortunately that system was in grave danger of doing exactly that in 20 different instances in Illinois. And so what's really in question is the system itself. If the system can't be guaranteed 100 percent error-free, then we shouldn't have the system. It cannot stand. It just is not right in our democracy and system of justice."

The governor's highly anticipated decision, which he said he arrived at over the weekend, undoes a capital punishment system in place since 1977 and adds Illinois to 15 other states that have abolished the death penalty.

Follow death penalty news on DCODP Social Media

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Delaware-Citizens-Opposed-to-the-Death-Penalty/119829101380763?>

Google Groups e-mail distribution list: <http://groups.google.com/group/DCODP>. Click on the *Join this group* link on the right side of the web page to join.

The Innocence Project

Founded in 1992 by Barry C. Scheck and Peter J. Neufeld at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University, The Innocence Project assists prisoners who could be proven innocent through DNA testing. To date, 268 people in the United States have been exonerated by DNA testing, including 17 who served time on death row. These people served an average of 13 years in prison before exoneration and release.

Featured in the 2010 movie *Conviction* starring Hilary Swank, the Innocence Project's groundbreaking use of DNA technology to free innocent people has provided irrefutable proof that wrongful convictions are not isolated or rare events but instead arise from systemic defects.

Six of the most common causes of wrongful conviction include: eyewitness misidentification, improper forensic science, false confessions, government misconduct, informants, and bad lawyering. For further information on the work of The Innocence Project, go to www.innocenceproject.org.

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Please make check payable to DCDP and send with completed form to Sally Milbury-Steen,
Treasurer, DCDP, c/o Pacem in Terris, 1304 North Rodney Street, Wilmington, DE 19806.
For more information call (302) 656-2721 or (302) 984-3355.