



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

BACKGROUNDER

DEATH PENALTY REPEAL SUPPORT: SB 1416 (Farmer); HB 6031 (Geller)

BACKGROUND:

The Church's position has been that executions are acceptable only as a last resort if there are no other means by which to keep society safe. However, these cases are practically non-existent today.

Our state's current penal system offers the alternative sentence of life without parole which protects society without taking an additional life.

Florida is a national outlier in regards to the death penalty. Our state:

- has exonerated more people from death row than any other state,
- maintains the country's second most populous death row,
- is one of only eight states that carried out an execution last year,
- is one of only five states that sentenced more than two people to death last year, and
- houses four of 16 counties in the nation that imposed more than 5 death sentences between 2010 and 2015.

BILL PROVISIONS:

Deletes all provisions in Florida Statutes which provide for the death penalty for capital felonies.

RATIONALE:

The death penalty is often applied arbitrarily, disproportionately affecting the mentally ill and the poor. There is grave potential that innocents have been executed as there have already been 161 persons exonerated from death row nationwide, 27 of those in Florida.

There is no significant evidence that the death penalty deters future crime, yet there is overwhelming research that the state will have a multimillion dollar cost savings applying the alternative sentence of life in prison without parole.

While there are murder victims' family members that hope the death penalty will provide closure for their great loss, many have publicly expressed that the decades of judicial uncertainty exacerbated their grief and their key to closure was mercy and forgiveness, not state sanctioned homicide

National public support for capital punishment has reached a 45-year low. A growing majority of people in the state and in the country prefer alternatives to this highly costly, highly ineffective, and highly flawed system.

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