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Sunday, January 13, 2008

Lieber Reacts to Death Penalty Fast Track Plan

California Political Desk
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Opposes Proposed Constitutional Amendment.

(Sacramento, CA) – Speaker pro Tempore Sally Lieber (D-San Jose) reacted to yesterday’s proposal to fast track executions. California Supreme Court Chief Justice Ron George presented the plan today in a hearing before the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice. He called for a constitutional amendment to deny Supreme Court review to condemned inmates.

“We must address wider reforms to this entire issue, such as disparate application standards and mistakes made in the process, rather than focus on speeding up death penalty appeals. It is premature to address this issue in this way when both the United States Supreme Court and a federal district court here in California are poised to rule on the constitutionality of lethal injection.”

“I am opposed to fast tracking the death penalty process, as has been done in Texas, China, and Iran. California’s death penalty system was voted on and approved by the people. They created a capital punishment system with automatic right of appeal to the Supreme Court. It is excessive to call for a constitutional amendment for the purpose of reducing the administrative burden on a court. If the system is broken, this is not the way to fix it,” said Lieber.

Lieber also reacted to the costs associated with the proposal.

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Additional judges, administrative staff, and specially trained court-appointed lawyers would be required as a consequence of the proposal.

“There is a stark irony that this proposal comes on a day when the Governor is set to slash

school aid by calling for the suspension of Prop. 98. To increase funding for the death penalty while cutting billions from education is offensive,” said Lieber.