

California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice

Statement on the Death Penalty

Dear Commissioners,

I would like to express my appreciation for the Commission's important work on:

1. In custody informant corroboration
2. Reliability and accuracy of eye witness identification
3. Taping of confessions

Today the commission is dealing with issues associated with the death penalty. It is clear from testimony to the Commission that the death penalty is deeply flawed, with over 660 death penalty cases pending before the courts.

To find a way out of this quagmire we need to set the stage for abolition of the death penalty. You have already heard eloquent arguments for the case for abolition. So I will restrict my comments to what has been achieved in the campaign to end the death penalty.

- All of the surrounding County Boards of Supervisors in the Bay Area have passed resolutions calling for a moratorium on the death penalty
- The faith communities have generated a ground swell of support for abolition. The leader of the faith community for abolition has been Sr. Helen Prejean. As she has said "The movement to abolish the death penalty needs the religious community because the heart of the religion is about compassion, human rights and the inherent dignity of each human person made in the image of God". As an example of the power of her voice, recently she visited our community and spoke of her abolition work. During her stay here she attracted 10,000 persons to hear her message.
- Kamala Harris, District Attorney San Francisco no longer seeks the death penalty.
- Donald Heller, who authored the States 1978 Death Penalty Statute, no longer supports the death penalty.
- New Jersey has abolished the death penalty
- The United Nations has adopted a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty

By opting for the alternative of Life Imprisonment, valuable resources can be saved, which then can be used for public safety, crime prevention and preservation of jobs. As part of our response to family members of victims, we need to provide additional resources to relieve their suffering.

Pursuit of the death penalty leads to a blind alley. There are better solutions to this issue.

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