

Kansas Conservatives Voice Concerns Over Death Penalty

Frustration with Kansas' death penalty is growing. Kansas' death penalty has suffered from delay, high costs, and ineffectiveness. In response, many Kansas conservatives have joined repeal efforts. Their reasons include its high cost, concerns over executing an innocent person, and a commitment to promoting a culture of life.

What Kansas Conservatives Are Saying

“ If we, as conservatives, are serious about cutting costs and promoting a culture of life, then our position on the death penalty is a no-brainer. Repeal it.”
– Chase Blasi, Board Member of Kansas Young Republicans

“ The concern I have about the death penalty is that government can determine value of life and can decide to end it or sustain it... God determines the value of each of us.”
– Former Republican State Representative Anthony Brown

“ Given the challenges that local and state budgets are facing, it does not make fiscal sense to keep the death penalty. A handful of capital cases cost taxpayers millions of dollars but do nothing to make us safer. Life in prison without parole is a proven alternative to the death penalty that is less expensive and, most importantly, more in line with promoting a culture of life.”
– Trey Joy, Mayor of Smith Center & Board Member of Kansas Young Republicans

“ I would prefer that Kansas repeals the death penalty and replaces it with life in prison without parole rather than try to expedite executions. As someone who is strongly committed to protecting life from conception to natural death, I want to be sure that Kansas passes legislation that promotes a culture of life.”
– Republican State Representative Bill Sutton

Kansas' Death Penalty: A Broken System

Risk of Executing an Innocent Person

- ◆ Since 1973, at least 160 individuals in the US have been wrongfully sentenced to death and later exonerated.
- ◆ There have been no death row exonerations in Kansas, but there have been mistakes involving other serious crimes. DNA evidence proved the innocence of Eddie Lowery and Joe Jones, who together spent 28 years in prison for rapes they did not commit.
- ◆ DNA evidence is available in only 5-10% of criminal cases. Even when it is available, in some cases investigators have falsified evidence. A human system is never 100% accurate.

Costly and Ineffective Government Program

- ◆ The death penalty is more expensive than life without parole because of the additional preparation in capital cases, the separate sentencing phase, post-conviction appeals, and the added costs of death row.
- ◆ A 2014 Judicial Council Study found that capital cases in Kansas cost 3-4 times more than similar murder cases in which prosecutors do not seek the death penalty.
- ◆ Osage County had to raise property taxes in 2010 due to the costs of a capital trial.

A Failed Policy for Victims' Families

- ◆ Capital cases prolong the legal process and can inflict additional harm on victims' families.
- ◆ Bob Hessman of Dodge City experienced a capital case after his daughter Mel's murder. The death penalty, he testified, "forces murder victims' families to endure a long, uncertain, and difficult process."
- ◆ A few capital cases demand disproportionate resources, which can divert resources away from counseling and support services addressing the real needs faced by victims' families.

Growing Concerns Over Kansas Death Penalty

- ◆ In 2010, an effort to repeal the death penalty and replace it with life in prison without parole almost passed the Kansas State Senate, falling only one vote short in a 20-20 tie.
- ◆ In 2014, Kansas' Republican Party removed the pro-death penalty plank from its platform. The same year, the Libertarian Party of Kansas added to its platform a plank supporting repeal of the death penalty.