



MEMORANDUM


To: Oklahoma Conservatives Concerned About the Death Penalty
From: Pat McFerron, President, Cole Hargrave Snodgrass & Associates
Re: Oklahoma Statewide Survey of 500 Registered Voters
Date: January 25, 2023

Cole Hargrave Snodgrass & Associates is pleased to present findings from our recent commissioned survey of 500 registered voters across the state of Oklahoma. A random sample of this type yields a margin of error of $\pm 4.3\%$ in 95 out of 100 cases. The survey is designed to reflect a presidential election electorate. Interviews were conducted January 2-5, 2023 and were gathered using text-to-web contact (25%), as well as through live telephone interviews on mobile (47%), and landline (29%) devices. Some numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

OVERVIEW

Replacing the death penalty with a life sentence without the possibility of parole starts at a majority (51%) support level in Oklahoma (29% strong support, 22% somewhat support). That is strong enough to be the starting point for a campaign.

A bipartisan group of legislators in Oklahoma are currently considering a bill to replace the death penalty with a sentence of life in prison with no possibility of parole. Recent analysis has estimated that this change would cut the cost of incarceration for death row inmates by half, saving the state tens of millions of dollars currently spent on lawyers and appeals. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose replacing the death penalty with a sentence of life in prison with no possibility of parole?

28.6%	Strongly support replacing death penalty with life / no parole	 51%
22.0%	Somewhat support replacing death penalty with life / no parole	
9.2%	Somewhat oppose replacing death penalty with life / no parole	
34.6%	Strongly oppose replacing death penalty with life / no parole	
5.6%	(Do not read) Undecided	


When asked how respondents would redirect the cost savings from replacing the death penalty, Republicans, Democrats, men, women, urbanites and rural dwellers preferred to use the savings for mental health programs (35% total) and for law enforcement and solving crimes (34% total combined). In particular, Republicans want the money to go to local law enforcement (23%) or to be used to solve other crimes (19%).

If a bill eliminating the death penalty became law in Oklahoma, where would you want to redirect the cost savings? Would you direct it to local police departments for public safety programs, to mental health programs, to local law enforcement who investigate unsolved rapes and murders, education, to the general fund, or something else?

34.6%	To mental health programs
19.2%	Local police department for public safety programs
15.2%	To local law enforcement who investigate unsolved rapes and murders
13.4%	Education
10.8%	To the general fund
6.8%	(Do not read) Undecided


When asked which punishment they prefer for persons convicted of first-degree murder, fifty-two percent (52%) of the electorate would support some level of a life sentence and that leaves just 36% of voters still supporting imposing a death sentence. There is support for life in prison among many key demographic groups; with those who identified as either rural or as Republicans being evenly divided on their preferred punishment.

Of the following list of choices, which punishment do you prefer for people convicted of murder: life in prison with NO possibility of parole, life in prison with a possibility of parole after at least 20 years, life in prison with a possibility of parole after at least 40 years, or the death penalty?

25.4%	Life in prison with No possibility of parole	 52%
15.8%	Life in prison with a possibility of parole after at least 20 years	
10.8%	Life in prison with a possibility of parole after at least 40 years	
35.8%	The death penalty	
12.2%	(Do not read) Undecided	

The survey identified overwhelming support for pausing executions to ensure the process is fair and just and does not result in the execution of innocent people across all demographics with 78% in favor and only 18% opposed. This was also true for 75% of Republicans, 80% of Independents, 76% of rural dwellers, and large majorities in every region of the state. Only 12% of respondents were strongly opposed, compared to 45% strongly in favor.

If the governor or attorney general were to temporarily pause executions to ensure that the process was fair and just, and does not result in the execution of innocent people, would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose this decision?

45.4%	Strongly support	 78%
32.2%	Somewhat support	
6.0%	Somewhat oppose	
11.8%	Strongly oppose	
4.6%	(Do not read) Undecided	

When asked whether they could vote for a candidate with whom they agreed on most issues but disagreed on the death penalty, 83% responded that they could vote for such a candidate or that the death penalty would not affect their vote. Only 12% of respondents said they could not vote for such a candidate. Of this 12%, roughly half oppose the death penalty and half support the death penalty. This is fairly consistent along partisan lines. A strong plurality does not consider the death penalty when voting.

How important is a candidate's position on the death penalty to you when you vote: Would you say: (Randomize)

38.8%	As long as I agree with the candidate on most other issues than the death penalty, I will still likely vote for them
12.0%	If a candidate disagrees with me on the death penalty, I will likely vote against them, regardless of where they stand on other issues
44.4%	I don't consider the issue of the death penalty when I vote
4.8%	(Do not read) Undecided