

Abolition of the death penalty

[Law](#), [Death Penalty](#)



Jeremy Brooks Suzanne Gerbasi Coms 101-37 10/30/12 Persuasive Speech

Topic: Abolition of the Death Penalty General Purpose: To Persuade Specific

purpose: To persuade my audience that we should abolish the death penalty

in California. Central Idea: The death penalty should be abolished because of

the inefficiency of the legal system, its high economic cost, and its moral

implications. I. Introduction When I joined the current debate team in high

school, I knew I would have to learn to respect and accept points of view

different than my own.

Arguing both sides of a hot topic taught me to value the merit of my

opposition's points. With much research and an open-mind, I even came to

change my opinions on many issues—including my support of California's

death penalty. After getting down to brass tacks and really looking at the

facts, I concluded that the negatives far outweigh any positives of the death

penalty. Along with the extremely high costs, it uses up countless hours of

court time and often discriminates against certain groups of people.

While other countries have moved forward and outlawed this practice, we

remain clinging to an idea that is no longer practical or ethical in today's

world. California needs to abolish the death penalty and save our time, tax

dollars, and innocent people's lives. You would think that keeping someone

alive for the rest of their life would be a greater financial burden than simply

condemning them to their death, right? Wrong. In this counter-intuitive

situation, executing a person is a much more complicated process than it

seems.

When you add up the costs of pre-trial legalities, the actual trials

themselves, appeal court cases, and the necessary incarceration of convicts

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in maximum-security prisons, the total has robbed Californians of an exorbitant amount of money. Exactly how much is that? Well, a study by Judge Arthur Alarcon and Prof. Paula Mitchell concluded that the death penalty in California has cost us more than \$4 billion since 1978. Furthermore, according to the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice, the death penalty policy is currently costing our state at least \$137 million each year.

Now compare this to the cost of a life without parole system-which would only cost the state \$11.5 million a year. Do the math; a switch to this kind of system would save more than \$125 million dollars annually- that isn't mere pocket change. Now let's take a look at how well the death penalty works in practice. To give you a picture of how inefficient California's death penalty system is, according to the Death Penalty Information Center- 86% of inmates die from other causes before they can be executed.

This is because inmates spend their time appealing, finding expert witnesses, and looking for loopholes in the system to drag out the court process. This takes up the valuable time of our limited resources of qualified judges and lawyers. By switching to a system that gives convicted felons life without parole, we would bring inmates to a similar standard of other prisoners convicted of serious felonies. This would restore valuable court time to judges and lawyers while still making sure that the lawbreakers are given the punishment they deserve.

So what happens when it actually comes to executing people? The death penalty has proven to be unfairly biased in many ways by the human rights organization Amnesty International. First of all, it is racially biased.

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Amnesty International's research has found that, " Since 1977, the overwhelming majority of death row defendants (77%) have been executed for killing white victims, even though African-Americans make up about half of all homicide victims. " Secondly, the death penalty doesn't take mental illness into account. Therefore, dozens of prisoners have been executed despite their disabilities.

Third, most people sentenced to death cannot afford to hire their own attorney. This means the state has to provide them with an unmotivated lawyer who will not likely present his best case possible. In addition, political factors, chance, and location can all decide whether a person lives or dies. Do we really want to make such an important decision- condemning a person to death- when such arbitrary conditions are present? Take into account that I have not even mentioned up to now the many times we have gotten it wrong and executed or had to release innocent victims.

Amnesty reports that more than 140 people have been cleared from crimes after being sentenced to die. I certainly don't want that hanging over my conscience. To be fair, since I have said why we should abolish the death penalty I suppose it is fair to give the two main arguments in favor of the death penalty a chance. One main reason I hear people say they support the death penalty is because it is a deterrent that scares people into cooperating. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this is true. In fact, there is evidence to support that opposite.

FBI data shows that the states without a death penalty have lower homicide rates on average. Also, most homicides happen on a whim- meaning the killer probably isn't clearly thinking through the consequences of his or her

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actions at the time of the crime. The other argument I hear is that it is cheaper to kill someone than take care of him or her until they die. Based on the data I provided earlier we know this is false. With a strong case for the abolition of the death penalty in California, it is time to let you know what you can do to make this happen.

Besides educating your friends, protesting the death penalty, and joining nonprofit organizations like Amnesty International, the most effective step you can take today to stop the death penalty is mark a yes on your ballot next to Proposition 34. Prop 34 would change our flawed policy to the life without parole option I mentioned. This would save valuable court time, taxpayers' dollars, and ensure that we aren't being racially biased or murdering innocent people. Any way you look at it, the death penalty needs to die.