

Prison and capital punishment impact

[Law](#), [Capital Punishment](#)



Most people are familiar with the term capital punishment in today's society. Capital punishment is defined as a legal action where an individual is executed as punishment for a crime. In shorter terms, capital punishment is the death penalty. Even though it is a functioning legal process, it does arise much controversy. The controversial matter of capital punishment affects both politics and society in the countries that it is present in. Regardless of the controversy surrounding capital punishment, it has been a longstanding legal process that has occurred and currently occurs in many nations around the world. Regardless of the current controversial issues surrounding capital punishment, it is a legal process that has been in effect since nearly the beginning of civilization. The first documented instances of capital punishments occurred in the earliest known tribes and civilizations. From what was found documented from their societies, capital punishments were typical attributes of their justice system. Capital punishment was also documented in religious texts such as the Old Testament of the Bible and the Torah used in the Jewish religion. Ancient Greek legislation, Ancient Roman legislation, medieval European legislation, and Ancient Middle Eastern legislation also included sections pertaining to the use of capital punishment on prisoners convicted of particular crimes. Perhaps the most famous document that included capital punishment was the Code of Hammurabi. Many of the punishments that were produced from capital punishment regulations were done so in view of the public as a warning to them. Not only did early societies partake in capital methods of punishment, but the methods with which they performed were rather gruesome. These gruesome methods included, boiling to death, dismemberment, decapitation, crushing,

slow slicing, crucifixion, stoning, and disembowelment. However, with the rise of nation states and the ideal of citizenship, capital punishment became much less used, and if it was used, was done so in more humane manners. Along with the ideals of citizenship, nation states that arose also believed in universality and equality, and these ideals soon spread through the United States. In the US, the most commonly used methods of humane capital punishments were the electric chair or the gas chamber, which was a less gruesome alternative to public hanging. Lethal injection soon replaced the prior methods as the most human form of capital punishment. Even though the US has developed humane methods of capital punishment, there was still opposition against this form of criminal punishment. Michigan was the first state to outlaw the death penalty, and this was done so in 1846. In the early to mid 1970's, the death penalty was actually deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court case of *Furman v. Georgia*. However, the *Gregg v. Georgia* case in 1976 deemed the death penalty legal under some circumstances. More restrictions were placed on capital punishments after the *Atkins vs. Virginia* case, which deemed the death penalty as unconditional for those that possessed mental retardation, and the *Roper vs. Simmons* case, which deemed the death penalty unconstitutional for criminals under 18 years old. Today, capital punishment is outlawed in 17 out of the 50 states and also illegal in the District of Columbia. The topic of capital punishment has impacted society in various ways. The first and most prominent effect this topic has brought upon society was major controversy. Capital punishment has split the population in two opposing sides: those who believe in the use of the death penalty and those that do not. Those who are

death penalty supporters believe that capital punishment puts an end to the criminals that are truly evil and horrible. The belief is also that the death penalty will lessen the overcrowding of prisons as well as saving money for those prisoners that we now have to take care of with our federal tax dollars. On the opposition and the beliefs of those who are not supporters of the death penalty, their stance is that the death penalty is unconstitutional due to the 8th amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Also, with some instances of wrongful execution occurring in recent history, some people believe that putting someone to death was not worth the risk that they were innocent to begin with. Regardless of the validity of either view, the controversy still brews between the two standpoints. Not only does capital punishment impact society, but it also impacts politics. In the political party world, conservative Republicans are typically supportive of the death penalty, while liberal Democrats are in opposition of the death penalty. This legal process affects politics because it affects how the public is going to vote for those that have certain capital punishments views. Those who oppose the death penalty are more likely to vote for a Democrat who opposes it, while those who support the death penalty are more likely to vote for a Republican who supports it. The legal process of capital punishment has a rather prominent impact on both society and politics in the United States of America in recent history as well as today. My personal beliefs in regards to capital punishment are more towards the viewpoints of conservative Republicans. Therefore, I am a supporter of the death penalty. People who oppose the death penalty often claim that it is breaching on our 8th Amendment right of no cruel and unusual punishment. However, what is

more cruel and unusual? Life in prison, locked in a box for the rest of your days, or put out of your misery quick and almost painlessly? I would much rather take the latter of the two options had I been a criminal who qualified for the death penalty. Also, capital punishment is not a punishment given for small crimes, such as petty theft or even more serious crimes such as armed robbery or battery. Capital punishment in this country is only issued for crimes involving first degree murder committed in aggravated circumstances. The punishments for this crime are either life in prison or execution. If we are to keep a convict in prison for the rest of his life instead of executing him, our federal tax dollars are put to supporting this inmate for the duration of his life. Not only do we have to feed this convict, but we also have to clothe him, provide him with shelter, and supply security measures to make sure that this inmate does not harm himself, others, or escape. These expenses add up rapidly, and one inmate can cost up to a million dollars if he is to be imprisoned for the duration of his life. One million dollars wouldn't be such a lofty expense if the above inmate was the only one in his circumstance. Unfortunately, this isn't the case. There are many inmates that are serving life sentences, and they all rack up the same amounts. We do not need to be paying taxes in order to support these inmates, especially when the standard of life in prisons has risen drastically over the years. For one lethal injection, it would cost around \$100,000 per execution; a substantially lesser amount than that of supporting an inmate for his life sentence in prison. With this view, I do not believe in gruesome punishments. I believe that lethal injection is the only way to go. Even though I am an avid believer in the use of capital punishment for those criminals who are eligible for it, I

believe that the legal system is far too lengthy in its duration between when an inmate is sentenced with execution and when the inmate is actually executed. I believe that once someone is sentenced with the death penalty, it should be carried out swiftly to prevent unneeded expenses spent on this sentenced inmate. Even with the flaws with capital punishment, I believe that it is an important and necessary part of our judicial and system. Capital punishment is a process in legal systems that has been used for centuries and in many different nations around the world. The topic of capital punishment, however, has sparked much controversy in recent years, and some nations and states in the USA have outlawed it entirely. Nevertheless, capital punishment is the death penalty, and that legal process does not look as though it will be ending anytime soon.

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