

FACT SHEET: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Connecticut's Death Penalty

- After the Supreme Court declared Connecticut's death penalty unconstitutional in 1972, the state adopted a new death penalty statute in 1973.
- Since 1973, there have been over 4,800 murders, 14 individuals sentenced to death, and one execution. Currently, nine individuals sit on Connecticut's death row.

Innocence

- Nationally, since 1973, 138 prisoners on death row have been exonerated.
- The average time spent on death row by an exoneree is 9.8 years.
- DNA has played a role in exonerating 17 death row prisoners. But in many death penalty cases, DNA testing proves impossible because of a lack of testable evidence.
- Scientific evidence strongly suggests that Texas executed an innocent man, Cameron Willingham, in 2004. Compelling evidence in other cases suggests more innocent people have been executed.
- Since 2006 in Connecticut, DNA evidence has helped exonerate James Tillman, Miguel Roman, Kenneth Ireland, George Gould, and Ronald Taylor for crimes of rape and murder. Collectively, they spent over 90 years in prison.
- Causes of wrongful conviction include: eyewitness misidentification, police coercion, perjury, prosecutorial misconduct, and inadequate representation.

Fairness

- Nationally, 50% of murder victims are white. In death penalty cases, however, the murder victim is white 79% of the time. Studies in North Carolina, Maryland, and California found that one's odds of receiving the death penalty increase significantly when the victim is white.
- On Connecticut's death row, seven of the nine inmates are minorities.
- Among those on death row, 95% could not afford their own attorney.
- Geography plays a critical role in who receives the death penalty. Four of Connecticut's nine death row inmates come from Waterbury, a city that makes up 3% of the state's population.

Cost

- Because of additional resources and preparation required in death penalty cases, a separate sentencing phase, post-conviction appeals, and the added costs of death row facilities, studies consistently find the death penalty to be more costly than life without parole.
- CONNECTICUT: The state's death penalty costs taxpayers \$4 million annually.
- MARYLAND: A capital-eligible case resulting in a death sentence costs \$1.9 million more than a capital-eligible case where the death penalty was not sought. Since 1978, the death penalty has cost the state at least \$186 million.
- NEW JERSEY: Between 1983 and 2005, the state spent \$253 million on the death penalty, despite never executing a single person during that period.
- CALIFORNIA: The death penalty costs taxpayers \$137 million a year, a price tag that would drop to \$11.5 million if replaced by life without parole.

The Death Penalty in the US

- The death penalty remains in 35 states and the US government and military. 15 states and the District of Columbia do not have the death penalty.
- Nationally the number of death sentences has dropped for seven straight years, with 106 in 2009, the lowest figure since the death penalty's reinstatement in 1976.