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**In support of the
Oklahoma Conference of Churches
Theological Statement in Opposition to the Death Penalty
and collaboration with the
World Coalition against the Death Penalty
OK-CADP highlights these topics to promote dialog and
contemplation about the death penalty in Oklahoma:**

- **Justice for Victims' Families**
- **Financial Facts in other States**
- **Costs: Education vs. Incarceration**
- **Deterrence**
- **Random Approach of Application**
- **Additional Resources**

1. Justice for Victims' Families

Connecticut's legislature voted to abolish the death penalty and the Governor signed the legislation April 25, 2012 with this statement, "the campaign to abolish the death penalty in Connecticut *has been led by dozens of family members of murder victims...*" 76 people who lost a loved one to murder signed a letter calling for Connecticut to end the death penalty and made statements like these:

"If we are serious about caring for victims, we will repeal the death penalty right away, The death penalty prolongs pain for families as it inevitably drags out the legal process and leaves families in limbo waiting for an execution that may never come."

"Losing my son was heinous. When he was murdered there was little discussion of Jumar. All the attention was focused on the murderer. I fought tooth and nail just to get people to stand up and pay attention. It is shameful that we spend millions of dollars and countless hours on a few capital cases when there are so many of us with unmet needs."

"The 'most heinous' criteria for death sentences is not only unhelpful, it is offensive. The implication is that other murders are ordinary and do not merit the death penalty. From experience, we can tell you that every murder is heinous, a tragedy for the lost one's family. The death penalty has the effect of elevating certain victims' families above others. Connecticut should be better than that."

The old excuse—that the death penalty is "for the victims' families"—no longer has even a shred of credibility. In fact, it is "for the victims' families" that we need to end the death penalty.

Journey of Hope—from Violence to Healing, another murder victims' family organization wrote, ***"We would like to live in a society that demonstrates its concern for victims by devoting resources to preventing violence and to addressing the real needs of victims in the aftermath of violence."***

2. Financial Facts in Other States

The death penalty may have been more cost effective than life in prison before the lengthy appeals process. It is not now. Most people knowledgeable about the subject agree that the delay now built into the system, more trial preparation, much longer time to get to trial, much longer jury selections and trials, much more

complicated and far more frequent appeals, and continuous motions, have increased the cost of capital punishment so that it is now many times the cost of keeping a prisoner in prison for life.

- In **Kansas**, the costs of capital cases are **70% more expensive than comparable non-capital cases, including the costs of incarceration.** (Kansas Performance Audit Report, December 2003).
- Enforcing the death penalty costs **Florida \$51 million a year above** what it would cost to punish all first-degree murderers with life in prison without parole. Based on the 44 executions Florida has carried out since 1976, that amounts to a cost of **\$24 million for each execution.** (Palm Beach Post, January 4, 2000).
- The most comprehensive study in the country found that the death penalty costs **North Carolina \$2.16 million per execution over the costs of sentencing murderers to life imprisonment. The majority of those costs occur at the trial level.** (Duke University, May 1993).
- In **Texas**, a death penalty case costs an average of \$2.3 million, **about three times the cost of imprisoning someone in a single cell at the highest security level for 40 years.** (Dallas Morning News, March 8, 1992).
- A recent study of the death penalty in **Nevada** compared the costs of defending capital and non-capital murder cases. The **additional** cost of capital murder cases was **\$170,000 to \$212,000 per case** compared to the cost of a non-capital murder case in the same county. The **80 pending capital murder cases** in Clark County will cost **approximately \$15 million more than if they were prosecuted without seeking the death penalty.**

3. Costs: Education vs Incarceration (Oklahoma’s Annual expenditures)

COST OF INCARCERATION <i>FY 2011 Actual Expenditures</i> <i>OK Department of Corrections webpage “Quick Facts”</i>			COST FOR PUBLIC K-12 SCHOOLS <i>NEA webpage Research December 2011</i> <i>Oklahoma ranked 49th for per student expenditure.</i>
<i>Type</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Annual</i>	<i>Current expenditures in Fall Enrollment 2010-2011</i>
Maximum	\$75.85	\$27,684	
Medium	\$38.98	\$14,228	
Minimum	\$37.22	\$13,586	
Community	\$37.14	\$13,557	
Work Centers	\$34.66	\$12,651	
<i>The average of all incarceration levels that we spend for each prisoner is \$17,270.</i>			<i>Oklahoma’s public education budget for each student is \$8,058.</i>

4. Deterrence

There has never been any evidence that the death penalty reduces capital crimes or that crimes increased when executions stopped. Consistent with previous years, the **2010 FBI Uniform Crime Report** showed that the South had the highest murder rate. The South accounts for over 80% of executions. The Northeast, which has less than 1% of all executions, tied with the West for the lowest murder rate.

A 2009 poll commissioned by DPIC found **police chiefs ranked the death penalty last among ways to reduce violent crime.** The police chiefs also considered the death penalty the least efficient use of taxpayers’ money.

Expert criminologists from around the country were **polled** on their views of deterrent studies and **84%** of them concluded that the death penalty did **not** act as a deterrent to murder.

The **U.S.** has a **much higher** murder rate than **countries in Europe** which do not have the death penalty.

5. Random Approach of Application

Many studies and statistics show that *race, wealth and geography* play a more significant role in determining who faces capital punishment than the facts of the crime itself. Although **homicide victims** are *six times* more likely to be **black** rather than white, **77 percent** of death penalty cases involve **white victims**.

It is hard to imagine a rich white person going to the death chamber after being defended by expensive lawyers. A member of **Murder Victims Families for Human Rights, Bob Curley** was for the death penalty when his 10 year old son, Jeffrey, was killed, then sexually abused in 1997. His opinion started shifting two or three years after Jeffrey's death. He read about Manny Babbitt who had been wounded in Vietnam and was considered a war hero. Babbitt, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, killed a California woman in 1980 and was executed in 1999.

And then there was Harvard graduate Ted Kaczynski, known as the Unabomber. His mail bombs killed three and wounded 23 between 1978 & '95. He's serving a life sentence without parole. **Bob Curley said, "The poor black man Manny Babbitt gets executed, and the white educated guy from Harvard gets life. That was a defining moment for me about how the system really works."**

The World Coalition web site, www.worldcoalition.org/worldday, is full of information to help us celebrate the progress made and put our local efforts into a global perspective.

Additional Resources for study, discussion, and contemplation are abundant on these websites.

- *American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma* <http://acluok.org>
- *Amnesty International USA* www.amnestyusa.org/death-penalty
- *Death Penalty Information Center* www.deathpenaltyinfo.org
- *Equal Justice USA* <http://ejusa.org>
- *Exonerations Report Northwestern University* www.law.unich.edu/special/exoneration
- *Innocence Project* <http://www.innocenceproject.org>
- *Murder Victims for Human Rights* mvfhr.blogspot.com
- *National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty* www.ncadp.org

These Books are also highly recommended.

Title	Author	Publisher
A Saint on Death Row	Thomas Cahill	Doubleday
An Art of Small Resurrections: Surviving the Texas Death Chamber	Walter Long	Pendle Hill Publications
Dead Man Walking	Sister Helen Prejean	Random House
Journey Toward Justice	Dennis Fritz	Seven Locks Press
Life After Death	Damien Echols	Blue Rider Press
The Death of Innocents	Sister Helen Prejean	Vintage Books
The Innocent Man	John Grishman	Doubleday
The New Jim Crow	Michelle Alexander	The New Press

OK-CADP is eager to make presentations with speakers, films, panel-discussions—tailored to meet any group's format. Contact us to schedule: 405-948-1645 okcadp@gmail.com