HB-6578

DEATH PENALTY FACT SHEET

The Death Penalty in Connecticut

- 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 4,700 murders, 13 death sentences, and one execution. Currently, 10 individuals sit on Connecticut's death row.
- A 2007 Quinnipiac university poll of Connecticut voters found that 47% favor the death penalty and 44% favor life without parole for someone convicted of murder.

Innocence

- Nationally, since 1973, 130 prisoners on death row have been exonerated.
- The average time spent on death row by an exoneree is 9.5 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.
- 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.
- Geography plays a critical role in deciding who receives the death penalty. In Waterbury, for instance, death sentences are handed down at a rate seven to eight times higher than in the rest of the Connecticut.

Costs

- Because of the additional resources and preparation required in death penalty cases, the separate sentencing phase, post-conviction appeals, and the added costs of death row facilities, studies consistently find the death penalty to be more costly to implement than life without parole.
- MARYLAND: A capital-eligible case resulting in a death sentence costs taxpayers $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 36 states and the US government and military. 14 states and the District of Columbia do not have the death penalty.
- After a high of 98 executions in 1999, the number of executions in the US has decreased over the past decade, dropping to 37 executions nationwide in 2008.

PREPARED BY: *CT American Civil Liberties Union, CT Catholic Conference, CT Conference United Church of Christ, CT Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, CT National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, CT Network to Abolish the Death Penalty*