

Senator Eric Coleman , State Representative Gerald Fox and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee.

OPPOSE: Senate Bill No. 1035, An Act Repealing the Death Penalty

My name is Cynthia Hawke-Renn, Sister of Jennifer Hawke-Petit, Aunt of Hayley and Michaela Petit.

First, I would like to ask you to challenge yourselves, by putting all your political and religious feelings aside. Try to look at this from an unbiased stance. I grew up in a somewhat liberal, very loving family. I have been opposed to the death penalty, as have my parents, feeling it was "cruel and unusual punishment. But, after studying the death penalty, and our countries way to end life on earth for a person or animal that is ailing, I realized that our "death penalty" is much the same. Our rights as Americans are to be allowed to die with dignity, without a struggle for breath, without anxiety and without pain. My sister and nieces were never allowed or ever given that option.

Imagine your dearest loved ones or even your pets and tell me it is not the option you would choose for them. What is so cruel and unusual about that? I believe it is the most humane peaceful way to allow someone to leave this world.

When I walked though my sister's home amidst the ash that They, their home, their pets, and all their possessions had been reduced to, not to mention my fractured brother in law's life, I was devastated. I do not feel it serves me well to harbor anger in my heart towards anyone. When I first thought about what I would want for those who committed these crimes, it was natural with my past beliefs to think ...well, life in prison of course. But, I reserved the right to change my mind as did my parents, after learning the details of this vicious crime and the heinous, torture, and terroristic acts that were committed in my sister's home. Walking through their once peaceful, happy, safe, home, the vile smells and horrific visions in my imagination as to what my loved ones suffered at the end of their lives permeated me. We did not ever imagine that such evil could exist. We do not feel we need men who could carry out such evil living among us.

Imagine if you can, random multiple acts of violence being committed against your family. We should all try to place ourselves as being the victim. Otherwise, it is very easy to distance yourself, while turning your head and saying, "it was not mine", therefore becoming complacent. At what point would you think a person should pay with their life for the combination of multiple crimes they commit?

Premeditated murder?

Sexual assault plus murder?

Robbery plus murder?

Kidnapping plus murder?

Killing family members in the presence of other family members?,

Assault, torture, and attempted murder?,

Pouring an accelerant on children while they are restrained to be ignited while alive???

When acts of this magnitude are combined and committed, a death penalty option needs to be available for other victims as well as the residents of the state at large.