

BILL S.B. No. 1035 AN ACT REPEALING THE DEATH PENALTY

Good afternoon:

My name is Carlos Hernández Chávez and I live in Hartford.

I am here to voice my support for Bill S.B. No. 1035 An Act Repealing the Death Penalty.

It is said that the ultimate punishment is a deterrent to violent crime. For many years, mounting evidence against this most Draconian practice worldwide has shown this is not true, nor has it ever been. What it does is terrorize, not deter.

I am here to say this abhorrent act is inhumane and morally wrong, and that it must be abolished. I know I'm not alone in the belief that the execution of people by the state is nothing more than what it really is: a rationalized form of revenge-based homicide, and the most barbaric form of punishment a society can impose on its citizens, regardless of the so-called humane methods used to carry it out. It can be successfully argued that the support for this penalty is largely based on emotion and that its imposition contributes nothing of value to society at large.

By putting men and women to death, the state and the society that supports this become de facto cold and calculated killers, cowering behind what is a distorted understanding of justice. The true meaning of Justice is not punishment; it is by definition the embodiment of a higher, universal ideal, one that bestows redeeming, fair consequences for all.

How can the state's administration of 'justice' as it is now be redeeming or fair, for when it executes someone, it in fact brings untold horror to the condemned, and thereafter to their families and loved ones? For centuries, executions have made the mothers and fathers, children, wives and husbands, and brothers and sisters of the condemned, innocents all, also the unwilling victims of the state. Where's the justice and humanity here?

It is wrong for members of a civil society like the one we claim to live in, to subject anyone to this kind of terror - because this is what it is - under the pretense it is the law. Laws are not and will never be perfect as they are made by people; and people are imperfect. And like many other inhumane and oppressive laws of the past such as slavery and segregation, and prohibiting women to vote, to name a few, this travesty of a law must also be repealed.

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Instead of wasting the people's money it spends on the fruitless, protracted and costly appeals process for many years, the state must instead redirect it to much-needed rehabilitation and re-entry programs for soon-to-be-released non-violent inmates of whom we continue to have just too many; work to make them ready to rejoin their communities, trained and ready to contribute as taxpaying members of society. Now that would be a much better use of taxpayers' money and a truer administration of justice.

I cannot be more clear: the death penalty, a flawed, discriminatory and inhuman practice, does not belong in the heart and conscience of a humane and civilized society. We must speak with the voice of reason and remove one of the ugliest blemishes that needlessly sullies the character of America as the self-professed champion of human rights it claims to be. As a world leader, our country - and our state - must make better choices on behalf of their citizens.

And there is now a precious opportunity to make one: To allow comparison to despot governments everywhere who practice this abhorrent act, or to proudly join history in the company of visionary abolitionists such as Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony. I think the choice could not be clearer.

I appeal to your conscience and civility, and to your sense of humanity and appreciation for what is good, and urge you to lead by example by repealing this unjust law.

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