

Testimony by Lisa Wilson Foley
Senate Bill 280 – An Act Revising the Penalty for Capital Felonies
Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT
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My name is Lisa Wilson Foley and I live at 76 Hartford Road in Simsbury, and I am offering testimony to oppose Senate Bill 280 – An Act Revising the Penalty for Capital Felonies.

There are few matters that stir the emotions more than the application of justice. In a free society, those who are elected to represent our interests at the local, state and federal levels, must do their best to promote laws that are fair, predictable and carried out with consistency.

The people who are served by these leaders are duty bound to weigh what they feel is good and just while responding and following the will of the people. The issue of the Death Penalty for serious and heinous crimes has now become a matter of renewed debate – led by some who wish to repeal and replace it with alternative punishment.

I would urge the committee and legislators to oppose any attempt to weaken or eliminate the application of the Death Penalty statutes to those who are convicted of the eligible crimes that fall under the law.

The Death Penalty serves the public needs on many levels. The Death Penalty can be used effectively to sometimes spare witnesses and survivors of needless pain and suffering.

But most importantly, the application of the Death Penalty for heinous crimes is an effective form of justice. All too often, some focus on the rights of the convicted and often forget those who must live on as survivors of those who have been the receivers of such horrible actions.

The current Death Penalty statute provides an almost endless ability by criminals sentenced for capitol felonies to appeal their conviction. If anything, legislators who support the Death Penalty should use this debate to argue for reforms in the Death Penalty statutes to tighten the timelines for direct appeals.

Efforts by Republicans and Democrats in 2009 and most recently in 2011 by House Republican leaders were responsible attempts to impose just sentences.

All of those currently residing as Death Row inmates have little fear of receiving true justice. But to use that as an excuse to repeal the law is a disservice to those who have been victims or survivors of those crimes.

There has also been some discussion that repeal of the Death Penalty would not affect the current class of Death Row inmates. Most legal experts that I have read believe the moment the Death Penalty is repealed, lawyers or other legal interest groups would file motions to have those convictions vacated and these actions would be successful.

That would be an act of injustice worse than the outright repeal of this important lever of justice.

I again urge you to oppose passage of Senate Bill 280 and focus on reforms that would ensure that any Death Penalty conviction is not merely an exercise, but a sentence that can be carried out in the public interest.