

Joint Judiciary Committee – Legislature, State of Connecticut In Support of SB 280

Meeting on March 14, 2012

Testimony of Rev. Walter H. Everett

My son, Scott, age 24, was shot and killed in Bridgeport in 1987. Although that was almost 25 years ago, the void in my life is just as real today. However, I am here today to state my opposition to the death penalty, based on its fiscal and emotional cost.

The death penalty has never proven to be a deterrent to potential murderers. There is no sound reason to continue to sentence people to death when there are alternatives.

The cost of the death penalty is exorbitant, especially at a time when legislatures around the country are trying to reduce expenditures. These costs include the following:

1. It costs far more to conduct a capital trial, than it does to try a person when the death penalty is not a factor.
2. It costs far more to keep a person in relative isolation on death row due in part to the necessity of 24-hour-a-day supervision of that one individual.
3. Execution, with its additional cost of security, adds even more to the cost.
4. Overall, studies have shown that it costs the state at least four times the amount of money to sentence a person to death, and then carry out that sentence as it does to sentence a person to life imprisonment.

Even more important is the cost to the secondary victims (families, close friends). The emotional cost of sitting through the initial trial, plus a series of mandatory appeals amounts to cruel and unusual punishment for these secondary victims, as they wait for fifteen, twenty, or more years for an execution that they believe will give them peace. Again and again, witnesses to an execution ask afterwards, "Why don't I feel any better?" The answer, of course, is that their lives are not changed. The execution of the offender has not brought back their loved ones. Now it is time for them to *start* the process of healing, a process that could have been started decades earlier with the finality of a life sentence. We can no longer afford to put on hold the lives of these secondary victims. We need to allow them to find a way to begin as early as possible to live again.

As an additional plea I would urge you to consider using the money saved to provide additional services for the secondary victims.

When my son, Scott, was killed, I determined very early that I would not let the offender take my life also – spiritually, emotionally, and possibly physically. I urge you to give that possibility to all secondary victims by voting to abolish the death penalty in Connecticut this year.