

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

Statements from Unlikely Allies on the Death Penalty

To help you identify and engage with unlikely allies, The Constitution Project (TCP) has compiled this list of publicly available statements in favor of death penalty reform. They demonstrate the diverse motivations of potential allies who support reform of the death penalty. We encourage you to share them with potential allies to demonstrate the wide support for death penalty reform initiatives. Unless otherwise noted, the individuals quoted in this pamphlet are not affiliated with TCP. However, please contact us if you would like assistance contacting unlikely allies for your advocacy purposes related to the death penalty or other criminal justice reform efforts. For more information please visit www.constitutionproject.org.

“Most of those on death row are guilty, but it turns out that not all are. In the last quarter-century, more than 100 men sitting on death row have been released because of reviews that have found them innocent. During the same period, nearly two dozen more have been executed for crimes it was subsequently did not commit”

David Keene, The Hill, October 24, 2005
Opinion Editor, The Washington Times
Board of Directors of The Constitution Project.



David Keene, Photo Courtesy of Gage Skidmore



Dannel Malloy, Photo Courtesy of USDAgov

“It is applied in our state and our nation, even in this day, in an arbitrary and capricious fashion. If you examine the statistics, and understand that people of color who kill white people are much more likely to receive the death penalty than other groups, than you begin to understand how capricious this is, in some cases, in its application.”

Dannel Malloy, Governor of Connecticut (D).
“The Rachel Maddow Show,” April 13, 2012.

“My own view on capital punishment is that it is morally justified, but that the government is often so inept and corrupt that innocent people might die as a result. Thus, I personally oppose capital punishment.”

Edward Crane, Former President of the Cato Institute.
The Lincoln Journal Star, April 22, 2013.

“As a conservative, I celebrated the vote [to repeal the death penalty] as a reflection of our values to be efficient and judicious with taxpayer dollars and to rid our government of programs that don’t work.”

Karen Pfaehler, former Vice-Chair of the Montana State Republican Party.
The Missoulian, March 18, 2011.

“We need major criminal justice and court reform now to address the crisis in our criminal justice system. However, the death penalty has no place in this reform effort. It is a simplistic, arbitrary, misguided, ineffective, and costly response, cloaked in the guise of a remedy to the brutalizing violence that angers and frustrates us all.”

Scott Harshbarger, Former Attorney General of Massachusetts (D). Statement on Reinstating the Death Penalty in the Commonwealth, November 18, 1991.



Scott Harshbarger, Photo Courtesy of the Rappaport Center



Mark White, Photo Courtesy of the Texas State Library & Archives Commission

“Scores of people have been released from death row after evidence of their innocence emerged, including at least a dozen from my home state. Particularly with the introduction of DNA testing, it has become increasingly clear that our criminal justice system is fallible, subject to human error even when prosecutors, judges, defense counsel and jurors all operate in good faith.”

Mark White, Former Governor of Texas (D); member, The Constitution Project’s Death Penalty Committee. Statesman-Journal, December 11, 2011.

“I do not believe that the government is capable of delivering the ultimate punishment in a fair, accurate manner, 100 percent of the time...It is worth contemplating why it is that conservatives who believe the government is incompetent in most areas of its agency are willing to assent credulously to its unerring competence when it comes to exercising the ultimate power over its citizenry: killing them.”

Rod Dreher, conservative columnist. The American Conservative, September 8, 2011.

“It’s hard to turn your back on innocent people whose lives have been destroyed. It’s becoming harder to justify the death penalty in the face of evidence that our system is flawed. It’s also becoming difficult to defend financially.

For years, people like me thought that being tough on crime meant supporting the death penalty. Times have changed, and it’s time for conservatives to get on the right side of the death penalty argument.”

Mary Kate Cary, former speechwriter for George H.W. Bush. U.S. News and World Report, March 30, 2011.



Bill Richardson, Photo Courtesy of Flickr

“Regardless of my personal opinion about the death penalty, I do not have confidence in the criminal justice system as it currently operates to be the final arbiter when it comes to who lives and who dies for their crime “

Bill Richardson, Former Governor of New Mexico (D). CNN.com, March 18, 2009.

“Society is not equipped to handle death penalty cases because of resources. Large law firms are not willing at this stage to take these cases on, at a cost of many thousands of dollars, in order to make sure that if the public wants the death penalty, it is not administered with arbitrariness and caprice.”

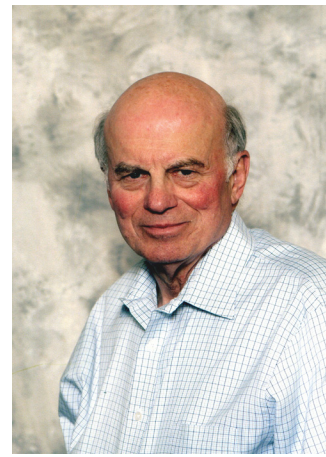
Ken Starr, Former U.S. Solicitor General (R). The San Francisco Chronicle, February 16, 2006.



Ken Starr, Photo Courtesy of USGov

“Conservatives have every reason to believe the death penalty system is no different from any politicized, costly, inefficient, bureaucratic, government-run operation, which we conservatives know are rife with injustice. But here the end result is the end of someone’s life. In other words, it’s a government system that kills people.”

Richard Viguerie, Chairman, ConservativeHQ.com; member, The Constitution Project’s Clearinghouse of New Voices. *Soyourself Magazine*, July 2009.



Richard Viguerie, Photo Courtesy of American Target Advertising

“It is time for conservatives to do what they do best and insist that a wasteful, inefficient government program gets off the books...Small government and the death penalty don’t go together.”

Christy Clark, Montana State House of Representatives (R). *Choteau Acantha*, September 19, 2012.

“I think in some sense the strongest argument against the death penalty and the one that I adhere to is that you try and govern a civilized society at the lowest level of violence that you can. It’s sort of a sign of civilization, that you can administer a society and have it live in relative peace with as little official violence as you can.”

Charles Krauthammer, conservative columnist. *Inside Washington*, February 24, 2013.



George Gascón, Photo Courtesy of Shawn Calhoun

“In my long public safety career...not once have I heard a murder suspect say he considered the death penalty when committing the offense. The truth is, killers don’t consider the death penalty when they decide to murder someone. They consider whether they will get away with it.”

George Gascón, District Attorney for San Francisco (D). *The Sacramento Bee*, October 14, 2012.

“I have become more aware than ever of the government’s ineptness and the likelihood of its making mistakes. I no longer trust the U.S. government to invoke and carry out a death sentence under any conditions.”

Ron Paul, Former U.S. House of Representatives (R-TX). *Liberty Defined*, 2012



Ron Paul, Photo Courtesy of U.S. Congress

“There is no abuse of government power more egregious than executing an innocent man. I am a firm believer in the death penalty, but I am an equally firm believer in the rights and protections guaranteed by the Constitution.”

Bob Barr, Former U.S. House of Representatives (R-GA) member, The Constitution Project’s Death Penalty Committee. *The New York Times*, May 31, 2009.



Bob Barr, Photo Courtesy of Noca2plus

“As governor of New Mexico, I was a bit naïve and I did not think the government made mistakes with regard to the death penalty. I came to realize that they do. I don’t want to put one innocent person to death to punish 99 who are guilty.”

Gary Johnson, Former Governor of New Mexico (R); Libertarian presidential candidate, 2012. *Slate*, September 22, 2011.



Gary Johnson, Photo Courtesy of Ron Hill Imagery

“Conservatives, especially, should draw this lesson...capital punishment is a government program, so skepticism is in order.”

George Will, conservative columnist.
The Washington Post, April 6, 2000.



George Will, Photo Courtesy of Keith Allison

“I have found no credible evidence that the death penalty has a deterrent effect on the crime of murder and that the enormous sums expended by the state in maintaining a death penalty system would be better spent on preventing crime and assisting victims’ families in overcoming pain and grief.”

Pat Quinn, Governor of Illinois (D). *The Chicago Tribune*,
March 9, 2011.



Pat Quinn, Photo Courtesy of Chris Eaves

“I think capital punishment’s day is done in this country. I don’t think it’s fairly applied.”

Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, USMC (Ret.).
Des Moines Register, June 12, 2000.



Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, Photo Courtesy of Holtocw

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