

Is there a Deterrent Value to the Death Penalty?

When death penalty bills have been considered in the New Hampshire legislature, proponents have stated that the death penalty will protect New Hampshire law enforcement officers and citizens from homicide. It will not.

The FBI Uniform Crime Reports for 2011 list no law enforcement officers feloniously killed in the New England states, where New Hampshire is the only state with a death penalty statute. In the South where all the states have the death penalty, twenty-nine law enforcement officers were killed.

The preliminary FBI Uniform Crime Report for 2012 shows that murders are down by 4.4% in New England where there has not been an execution since 2005. Only 0.3% of executions in the United States have occurred in New England since 1976. Murders are up 2.5% in the South where 82% of executions have occurred since 1976.

In a 2009 poll of 500 of the nation's police chiefs, the death penalty was ranked last in their priorities for effective crime reduction. Sixty-nine percent of the police chiefs included in the survey agreed that murderers do not consider the range of consequences before committing a murder.

-- *"Reconsidering the Death Penalty in a Time of Economic Crisis,"*
Death Penalty Information Center Report

My experience indicates that people committing crimes either do not consider the consequences, believe the consequences will not apply to them, or do not believe they will be caught.

-- Ray Dodge, retired Chief of Police for Marlborough, NH

The National Research Council

Finally, the National Research Council also cites murderers' views of the risk of the death penalty as one of the major flaws in deterrence research. The NRC does not believe that deterrence

research to date is informative about the impact of the death penalty on homicide rates, and therefore the research should not be used in deliberations about the death penalty.

-- *The NRC, Law and Justice Report Brief, April 2012*



“The existence of a deterrent effect remains highly doubtful, in spite of many efforts to demonstrate it.”

- *John Lamperti,*
Professor of
Mathematics,
Emeritus,
Dartmouth College



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