



SB189 “Death Penalty Amendments”

Responses from Coalition Member Organizations to Failed Repeal of Death Penalty in Utah

“Although I am disappointed that the bill did not make it over this hurdle, I am very proud of the progress we made. Utah’s legislative leaders, led by Senator Urquhart and encouraged by many from the community, undertook thoughtful and passionate conversations. They looked hard at the reality of our failed death penalty system and took bold steps toward a more just and effective alternative. It’s obvious that our legislative leaders have taken to heart last year’s criminal justice reform commitments. The respect with which this effort to repeal the death penalty was undertaken and debated was heartening.”

Karen McCreary, Executive Director
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF UTAH

“Our coalition—and the bill’s sponsor, Senator Urquhart—pushed the issue of repealing the death penalty further than anyone in conservative Utah expected. Nebraska’s leadership has paved the way for red states throughout the country to follow. Although this year’s bill ultimately failed, executions in Utah have been put on notice: your days are numbered.”

Connor Boyack, President
LIBERTAS INSTITUTE

“The Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City is grateful to Sen. Steve Urquhart for providing our state with its first substantial opportunity to consider repealing the vengeful practice of execution. We are hopeful that in the very near future state legislators will embrace the opportunity to protect the sanctity of all life and eliminate a punishment that serves only to perpetuate a culture of violence.”

Jean Hill, Peace & Justice Ministry Director
THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAT LAKE CITY

“The death penalty is being eliminated everywhere around the country and the progress made on the bill this year shows that it will soon be repealed here in Utah too. The death penalty wastes millions of

dollars and almost never results in executions. And, it harms the families of victims when cases drag on for decades because their wounds are re-opened again and again and they never have closure.”

Ralph Dellapiana, Director

UTAHNS FOR ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

“To be honest, I never thought the bill would make it to the House Floor! This year has proven that the will is here, we now can spend the next year educating citizens about the broken system surrounding the death penalty. When people have all the data, most agree, repeal is the conservative thing to do!”

Darcy Van Orden, Utah Director

CONSERVATIVES CONCERNED ABOUT THE DEATH PENALTY

“Reflecting a growing consensus that capital punishment has failed, the Utah Legislature came within just a few votes of ending the death penalty in one of the most conservative states in the nation. Despite the traditional support for the death penalty among conservative officials, lawmakers demonstrated growing unease for this wasteful, costly practice. The debate showed that capital punishment does not deter crime, while wasting millions of dollars for just a few high profile crimes and devastating victims’ family members. The Utah Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers will continue to collaborate with fellow reform-minded groups and individuals to implement smarter response to crime that actually work as opposed to expensive, costly programs like the death penalty.”

Kent Hart, Executive Director

UTAH ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

“One hundred and fifty six innocent men and women from death rows around the county have been fully exonerated, proving our criminal justice system is broken. The Rocky Mountain Innocence Center understands and respects that many people have differing views about issues surrounding the death penalty, including the morality of its use, the relative costs associated with it, and whether it has a deterrent effect. Our focus, however, is on the risk of executing innocent people. Having an irreversible punishment in a wholly imperfect system is simply wrong. RMIC is disappointed that the Utah House of Representatives rejected the death penalty repeal. We hope the legislature will revisit this issue during the next session and take this deeply important step in criminal justice reform.”

Jensie Anderson, Legal Director

ROCKY MOUNTAIN INNOCENCE CENTER