

WHY R.E.P.E.A.L.?

EXPENSE: The Enormous Cost of the Death Penalty

Louisiana's Death Penalty Will Cost Almost ¼ Billion Dollars To Enforce

Many people assume that the death penalty is cheaper than housing and feeding someone in prison for life. In reality, the lengthy death penalty process costs far more than a life sentence. It is a bloated government program for lawyers and experts that bogs down law enforcement, disrupts the courts, delays justice for victims, and devours millions of dollars that could save lives, promote justice and protect the public.

More than a dozen states have found that death penalty cases are up to 10 times more expensive than comparable non-death penalty cases.

- In Louisiana, a single prosecution of five capital defendants cost 15 Million dollars. Of these five cases, three defendants were ultimately sentenced to life anyway. Two defendants were sentenced to death, but their appeals are still pending at additional costs.
- Capital cases require at least two defense attorneys, often have numerous prosecutors, and multiple experts, with lengthy hearings and trials that are weeks and months long, with the state paying for both the prosecution and defense. All of these costs are incurred long before the lengthy and expensive Supreme Court mandated appeals even begin.
- Additional expense comes because individuals sentenced to death are housed in specialized individual secure facilities with heightened Department of Corrections supervision, and are unable to work in the fields or elsewhere in the prison prior to the execution of sentence.

100 Million Dollars For One Execution

Over the past ten years, Louisiana has paid 100 Million dollars for a death penalty system that has resulted in the execution of a single person - who volunteered for his own execution.

To fund a capital defense system that might result in the execution of a single individual, taxpayers would have to spend almost ¼ Billion dollars, because:

- The cost to maintain a capital defense system alone is at least 9.9 Million dollars per year. Estimates of cost to prosecute, proceed to trial, sequester the jury, and provide for appellate review are at least 2 Million dollars per year.
- The average time from arrest to trial in Louisiana in a capital case is 3.6 years.

Louisiana's Death Penalty

- The average time on death row in Louisiana is roughly 17.4 years.
- 21 years times 11.9 Million dollars = 249.9 Million Dollars or ¼ Billion dollars.

The odds are – however – that this person will never be executed because only 1 in 1000 murders in Louisiana results in an execution. A vote to retain capital punishment prospectively is a commitment to paying for a system that will not result in an execution for at least two decades, if the death penalty exists at all at that time.

It is not possible to have a cheaper capital punishment system without risking the execution of innocent individuals or violating the constitution.

The Death Penalty Isn't A Priority For Louisiana Taxpayers

In a poll conducted in 2016 by Multiquest International of voters from every parish in the state, Louisiana citizens made clear the death penalty is far from their top priority.

- Over 85% of Louisiana citizens ranked spending taxpayer dollars on k-12 education, healthcare, roads and highway repairs, and reducing college costs as extremely or very important. Only 37% of these voters said the death penalty was important.
- Voters were asked whether they prefer to raise taxes to keep the death penalty or cut costs by eliminating the death penalty. More than half said that they wanted to eliminate the death penalty.
- Voters indicated that legislators support for the death penalty was the *least* important feature of their voting decision, just 8% of voters said their legislator's position on the death penalty was their priority.
- Over 57% of voters preferred life with parole after 35 years or life without parole over expensive, broken death penalty.

Given our state's other pressing budget needs and taxpayer priorities, it no longer makes sense to invest in our expensive, inefficient death penalty.

For more information visit: www.larepeal.org