

# Talking Points for Volunteers

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## **1. Delaware: a small state, big on death.**

- Even though Delaware is a small state, we execute our fellow citizens more frequently than California, the state with the largest death row in the country.
- Per capita, we rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in executions and 5<sup>th</sup> in death sentences.
- Compared to the other 33 states with the death penalty, Delaware's statute governing the death penalty is one of the broadest; virtually any murder can be tried as a capital murder here.
- Delaware is only one of three states where a trial judge can overrule a jury's decision not to impose a death sentence. The others are Florida and Alabama.
- There are currently 15 men on death row in Delaware.

## **2. Keeping the death penalty means risking a wrongful execution.**

- Since 1973, at least 151 people who were convicted and sentenced to death have been released from death rows nationwide.
- Mistaken eyewitness testimony, misconduct by police or investigators, and false confession due to mental illness or torture are some factors that lead to wrongful convictions.
- The death penalty system is operated by people and people make mistakes. We cannot get it right 100 percent of the time and when a human life is at stake, there is simply no room for error.

## **3. The death penalty diverts funds from victims.**

The death penalty is a costly system that diverts attention and resources away from the victims' families. Many family members who have lost a loved one to murder do not feel that the death penalty will heal their wounds or end their pain. The extended process prior to an execution, which can be as long as 20 – 30 years, can prolong the agony experienced by the family. We can better serve the needs of all victims by repealing the death penalty and channeling the funds saved to provide better services for victims of crime.

## **4. The death penalty is applied unfairly and arbitrarily.**

The death penalty is a lethal lottery; only two percent of known murderers are sentenced to death and they are primarily people of color, the poor, mentally ill and undereducated. Often, location, local politics and the quality of representation play more of a role in sentencing than the actual crime.

## **5. The death penalty is more costly to taxpayers than life without the possibility of parole.**

Studies have consistently found that the death penalty as a whole is more expensive than true life without parole. The money we spend on the death penalty could be better used to fund services for victims, such as grief counseling and crime prevention programs.

#### **6. The death penalty is not a deterrent.**

There is no evidence that the death penalty deters murder. In fact, murder rates are higher in states with the death penalty than in states without it. In a 2009 poll, police chiefs ranked the death penalty last in the priorities for crime prevention. The death penalty is ineffective as a law enforcement tool and we do not need it.

#### **7. The vast majority of religions and faith groups oppose the death penalty.**

Religious communities oppose the death penalty because it is a violation of human rights and perpetuates violence. Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Jewish faiths and most other religions and faith groups have adopted statements in opposition of the death penalty.

#### **8. The United States is the only western country in the world that executes people.**

This puts us in the company of countries such as Iran, Iraq and China. If other countries without the death penalty have lower crime rates, such as Canada whose crime rate dropped after it abolished the death penalty, maybe we have something to learn about crime prevention.

#### **9. About the Delaware Repeal Project**

The Delaware Repeal Project is a coalition effort began by our founding partners:

- Delaware Citizens Opposed to the Death Penalty
- The Delaware Center for Justice
- The American Civil Liberties Union of Delaware
- The League of Women Voters
- The Delaware NAACP
- Pacem in Terris

Other partners include:

- Amnesty International
- Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation
- Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights
- Equal Justice USA
- Progressive Democrats of Sussex County
- Psychiatric Society of Delaware
- The Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware

Through outreach and education, we aim to educate the public on the problems with our death penalty system and the benefits of its repeal in Delaware. We would like to see the eventual repeal of Delaware's death penalty and an expansion of services for victims of crime with the money saved by repeal. We also believe that repeal of the death penalty will help reduce violence in our communities.

DE Repeal is guided by an advisory board comprised of representatives from the founding organizations. We also work closely with a Religious Organizing Committee made up of clergy from the diverse faith groups in Delaware.

### **Tips for Tabling a Community Event**

"Tabling" is an exciting way to engage members of the public and provide information on the death penalty. What we mean by a "table" is an eye-catching display on any surface that lets you share printed information and other materials with the public and engage interested individuals in conversation.

DE Repeal will be tabling community events such as festivals, fairs and community days. When tabling, we invite individuals to sign up to support the repeal effort and provide them with the opportunity to take immediate action against the death penalty. Tabling is a great way to get involved in the repeal effort, meet new people and interact with your community.

### **Best Practices and Tips for Tabling an Event with DE Repeal**

- Be prepared, patient and flexible throughout the tabling process. You never know what situations may arise or opportunities pop up.
- Be high-energy and enthusiastic but avoid being aggressive.
- Generally you will find people receptive and friendly, or they will simply walk by you. You don't have to engage every person.
- Some people will want to talk, others will simply want to look at, read and take literature. Some people may have questions or wish to engage in conversation. Be friendly and let the public engage with you as they wish.
- On occasion you will encounter someone who wants to engage in debate or argument – Don't! A loud or animated conversation will keep those who are interested away. Be respectful, but spend your time with those who want to take action or whose minds can be changed.
- Decide on your approach or message. Ask those visiting the table a question, such as, "Would you like to sign up to be part of our email list?" or "Do you know about the repeal effort in Delaware?"
- It's OK to answer difficult questions with, "I don't know, but if you want to leave me your contact information, we can get an answer for you."
- Hand visitors and passersby our website cards; this is a great way to communicate with festival attendees in a matter of seconds.

- If someone is especially interested, make sure to invite them to upcoming death penalty events or meetings.
- Most importantly, have fun!