

The Abolitionist

JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS:

National Coalition to
Abolish the Death Penalty:
www.ncadp.org

Death Penalty Information
Center
www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

Murder Victims' Families
for Reconciliation:
www.mvfr.org

NATIONAL CURE
www.curenational.org

ALCU
www.ACLU.org/capital/index

Amnesty International, USA
www.amnestyusa.org

Equal Justice Initiative
eji.org

WRITE A DEATH ROW PRISONER

Adopt a pen pal on death row.
Write a letter or send a card. To
find our more, contact:

Death Row Support Project
PO Box 600, Dept. "C"
Liberty Mills, IN 64946
www.brethen.org

OUR MISSION

The mission of Coloradans
Against the Death Penalty
is to abolish the death pen-
alty in Colorado through
religious, educational, po-
litical, and victims rights
efforts.

Use Death Penalty Money for Unsolved Murders Michael L. Radelet

In 1976, 79 percent of homicides in the United States were solved by arrest. By 2005 that had dropped to 62 percent.

Boulder is fortunate to have two unusually distinguished legislators who are listening to the family members of homicide victims and finding novel ways to help investigate these unresolved cases. Rep. Paul Weissmann has authored a bill that would use the money we waste on the death penalty and instead use it to fund investigations into cold homicide cases.



Representative
Paul Weissmann



Howard Morton,
Families of Homicide
Victims and
Missing Persons



Representative
Claire Levy

On Monday, Rep. Claire Levy, chair of the Judiciary Committee, skillfully presided over a session that (finally) allowed the family members to be heard. In the end, the bill abolishing the death penalty and using the money to investigate unsolved homicides passed on a 7-4 vote.

That is not to say that Reps. Weissmann and Levy did not face stiff opposition. Several Colorado prosecutors, the Attorney General, and others with a financial interest in preserving the death penalty went ballistic, predicting nothing but gloom and doom if their death penalty cash cow disappeared. Yet again, they turned their backs on the families of homicide victims.

Hopefully Gov. Ritter will display the same leadership and wisdom as our Boulder representatives and put his signature on this bill.

"Money matters are delaying a bill to abolish the death penalty and dedicate the savings to solving Colorado's 1,400 unsolved homicides. Supporters of **House Bill 1274** think it would save millions, but more conservative estimates put that sum closer to \$370,000. House Democrats pushed the measure through one committee, and it now waits in the House Appropriations Committee." (Denver Post, March 8)

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How to attend a death penalty trial

David Lindsey

Few acts to oppose capital punishment are more powerful than attending a death penalty trial.

Friendly faces in the courtroom buoy the spirits of the defense team who face the day-to-day callousness of a system that allows this arbitrary and barbaric punishment to continue. Equally important, attendance sends a message to the larger community that opposition to the death penalty is widespread. Sitting in silent support is eloquent in itself, but being there presents a further opportunity to engage members of the media who often are limited to interviewing victims and death-penalty supporters because the defense team is under a gag order.

As powerful as attendance is and though the Sixth Amendment guarantees defendants' rights to a public trial, days can go by in a death penalty proceeding without a single attending citizen. Coloradans Against the Death Penalty and its allied organizations propose to remedy this situation by alerting members when and where death penalty trials occur.

For first timers ready and willing to lend support here are some things to keep in mind:

- Courthouses screen for metal at entrances and that may happen again in the courtroom. Do not be intimidated by this process; in general, the security screeners are professional and courteous.
- There is usually ample seating in the gallery of the courtroom, with the possible exception of opening and closing arguments and the

return of the verdict. Simply sitting on the side of the defendant speaks volumes. By doing that, everyone knows you are there to support the defendant and it's a good way to voice opposition to the death penalty without saying a word.

- Because trial witnesses aren't allowed to view proceedings, you may occasionally be asked who you are. Simply say, "I'm a concerned citizen and I want to watch the trial."
- You may come and go as you wish, but wait for times when leaving won't disrupt court proceedings. Some parts of these trials are exciting and engrossing, others are boring and tedious.
- Dress should reflect a respect for the dignity and solemn proceedings of the criminal justice system. Symbols of death-penalty opposition should not be brought into the courtroom. Even outside the courtroom, where jurors might be taking a break, be mindful not to do anything that could be seen or overheard by a juror in the case. Members of the media may be approached, however.

Attendance at death penalty trials will provide invaluable information to opponents of capital punishment; they will be better-educated citizens, and better advocates for abolition. On a broader level, though opposition to the death penalty is widespread in Colorado, that opposition is not evident in the courtrooms of this state, leading to the perception that abolitionists aren't committed to their cause. It is time to change that perception and turn our principles into action.

COLORADO CITIZEN ACTION ALERT

There have been more than 1,400 unsolved murders in Colorado since 1970. In many of these cases, the killers still walk free among us. In an effort to learn the truth about what happened to their loved ones, and to protect society by catching the killers in those cases, Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons (<http://www.unresolvedhomicides.org/index.cfm>) has called for greater funding for the Cold Case Team at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. The CBI Cold Case Team was legislatively mandated in 2007, but only has funds for a single analyst. More funding is vital to solve these crimes and catch the killers, but the rules of the Colorado legislature require that any new expenditure includes a funding source.

Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons (FOHVAMP) asks that Colorado's failed death penalty system be shut down and that the money saved be put toward something that will actually help victim's family members and protect our communities. House Bill 09-1274 does exactly that.

SUPPORT HB-1274 by contacting your Colorado representative!

HB 1274 passed the House Judiciary Committee on February 23 and currently awaits a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee. If it passes in Appropriations, HB 1274 will go to a vote of the full Colorado House of Representatives. Please contact your representative TODAY with three simple actions to convey the message that:

"I live in your district, and I ask you to support HB-1274, the bill to provide funding for the Cold Case Unit by repealing the death penalty. Murder victim family members deserve to know the truth about what happened to their loved one."

Feel free to elaborate, but that is all that you need to say. Be polite, brief, and to the point. Be sure to include your full name and address so that your representative knows that you are a constituent who lives in his or her district. Unless you are an official representative of an organization, it is best to write as an individual and not as a member of the organization that sent you this message.

If you don't already know who your state legislators are, enter your zip+4 zip code at http://www.vote-smart.org/resource_govt101_02.php to learn that information. Click on "complete contact information" to receive the postal address.

#1 - WRITE a brief, hand written note and put it in the postal mail to your representative. If you can write two notes, send one to their Capitol office and one to their district office if an address is given. This is probably the strongest action you can take.

#2 - After you mail your letter, CALL your representative and leave a message at both the district and capitol offices.

#3 - After you make the calls, send an e-mail.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE:

#4 - Ask others you know to take the same actions.

#5 - Sign up with Coloradans Against the Death Penalty to receive the latest updates and further action opportunities. Sign up here: <http://www.coadp.org/>

Cents and Sensibility

Angela Campbell

In the midst of one of the nation's worst financial crises, Colorado certainly has challenges to address. In Gov. Ritter's Jan. 8 State of the State address, he said, "We're making state government work better for taxpayers, taking a more common-sense approach and saving



hundreds of millions of dollars, including \$600,000 simply by renegotiating cell phone contracts; \$600,000 may not sound like a lot, but every dollar counts."

Times may get worse before they get better, Governor Ritter said, outlining some of the measures,

no matter how seemingly inconsequential, the State is taking to reduce the impact on Colorado's working families. Government is trying to increase its efficiency and reduce waste.

After listening to Governor Ritter trying to make the best of a challenging situation, I thought now is the time for Coloradans to take another look at the Cold Case Bill brought to a vote last session by Rep. Paul Weissmann, D- Louisville. In a State where every dollar counts, Coloradans should be asking whether the death penalty is worth what it's costing, particularly when it's been used so infrequently in recent years.

Howard Morton, on behalf of Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons, has worked tirelessly to introduce a bill which would help bring justice to families dealing with the loss of loved ones whose mur-

ders remain unsolved. Last year, the bill nearly passed. This year, HB09-1274 made it through House Judiciary Committee and now it waits in the Appropriations Committee. If it passes there, it will soon be before the House.

This bill seeks to repeal the death penalty in Colorado. It again declares the intent of the General Assembly to use the savings from the abolition of the death penalty to fund the cold case unit in the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

Values and ethical considerations aside, this bill makes sense for Colorado. In a state faced with numerous job losses, closures of state-run facilities and other possible losses of important state programs, people are asking "Is the death penalty worth what it's costing us?"



Richardson Foregoes Money Argument, Cites Morality

"Gov. Bill Richardson has signed a bill to abolish the death penalty in New Mexico.

Richardson, who was previously a supporter of capital punishment, said repealing the death penalty marked the end of a "long, personal journey" for him personally.

"The sad truth is the wrong person can still be convicted in this day and age, and in cases where

that conviction carries with it the ultimate sanction, we must have ultimate confidence - I would say certitude - that the system is without flaw or prejudice," Richardson said.

After the announcement, news spread quickly through the Roundhouse and was featured prominently on national media Web sites.

The repeal will only pertain to crimes committed on or after July 1, 2009. That means the two New Mexicans currently on death row, as well as others whose cases are pending, could still be executed." (Albuquerque Journal, March 18)

Thank you for financially supporting our work

These membership dues and donations can be made through Paypal on our website, www.coadp.org. If you prefer not to make a secure online donation, please use the form below and mail your donation to PO Box 46123, Denver, CO 80201.

Thank you!

To become a member please choose level:

- Senior/Student/Low Income \$ 15.00
- Individual: \$ 30.00
- Family: \$ 50.00
- Benefactor: \$100.00 (Includes three free individual memberships. Please provide information for three free members on a separate page.
- Corporate Member/Law Firm: \$250.00 (Includes five free individual memberships. Please provide information for five free members on a separate page)

If you do not wish to become a member but do still wish to offer support:

I want to make a one-time donation: _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$75
 _____ \$100 (Sustaining donor) _____, Other

I want to make a recurring donation: Monthly: \$ _____ Quarterly: \$ _____ Annually: _____

(Please provide home information for legislative tracking)

NAME: _____

STREET: _____ CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____ EMAIL: _____

COUNTY: _____, LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

Please tell us who you are:

- I am a murder victim family member and I oppose the death penalty.
- I am a member of the law enforcement community.
- I am a veteran or active member of the US Military.
- I am a member of _____ (church, profession, other organization).

I am willing to volunteer for (circle one): Newsletter, Administration, Political Action,
 Letter Writing, Contacting the press, Other: _____

CADP is a §501(c)(4) organization. Our mission is both educational and political -- to abolish the death penalty in Colorado. Therefore, while we have non-profit status, contributions are not tax deductible.

Member ALERT: Please show your support

The Robert Ray trial will be starting April 1 in Arapahoe County. Counsel invites members to sit in the courtroom to show support for life, Robert Ray and his defense team. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday and 8:30 to noon on Friday. Counsel is in jury selection now in Judge Gerald J. Rafferty's courtroom, room 407. The trial starts April 1st, room 201.

COLORADANS
AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY
PO Box 46123
Denver, CO 80201-1745
Forwarding Service Requested

Rome's Coliseum

Rome's coliseum lit the night sky March 2 to recognize the Montana Senate's vote to abolish the death penalty on a vote of 27-23. As the Abolitionist goes to press, it appears New Mexico will be the next honoree; New Hampshire, Nebraska, and our own fair state may be celebrating their evenings at the coliseum as well.

There are no done deals. In Maryland, where a vote to repeal lost by only one vote last year, Gov. Martin O'Malley this year told the Maryland Senate that the death penalty no longer was economically defensible.

O'Malley cited a study by the Urban Institute which concluded death penalty cases cost three times more than murder cases in which the death penalty is not sought. The Urban Institute looked at 1,227 Maryland homicides between 1978 and 1999 in which defendants were eligible to receive death sentences. Cases in which the death penalty wasn't sought averaged \$1,103,000; cases in which it was unsuccessfully sought cost \$1,793,000 while death penalty cases averaged \$3,017,000.

Death penalty cases cost more because trials were longer, more lawyers were required, they tended to have multiple appeals and incarceration of a death-penalty defendant required a higher level of supervision. However, the Maryland Senate's response was to forego total repeal, but limit capital punishment to cases where biological evidence or videotape made guilt incontrovertible.

Capital punishment costs also were an issue with Kansas State Sen. Carolyn McGinn, a Republican, who figured each case that drew life imprisonment instead of the death penalty could save her state \$500,000. Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico, who has opposed abolition in the past, cited concerns of possible miscarriages of justice, but also the enormous expense of death penalty cases, and said he would consider signing such a bill in these difficult economic times.

Issues of saving money and saving lives have resulted in strange bedfellows, epitomized by the Montana Senate's recognition at the Roman coliseum. The tradition, to bathe the coliseum in golden light every time the death penalty takes a serious step back in the world, began in 2000 and is sponsored by the activist Community of Sant' Egidio, the United Nations, the city of Rome, Amnesty International, Hands Off Cain and the Vatican.