



Maryland's Death Penalty

The Case for Repeal

We've learned a lot about the death penalty since 1978.

For nearly three decades, we have studied and tinkered with the death penalty in an effort to make it fair, accurate, and effective. But despite the best intentions of many, we now know the system is broken. For all the time we take to try to repair it, our death penalty will continue to fail the people of **MARYLAND**.

The risk of executing an innocent person is real.

MARYLAND has sentenced innocent people to life in prison and, in the case of Kirk Bloodsworth, even death. The criminal justice system is run by human beings — and we are not perfect 100% of the time. Innocent Marylanders have been convicted as result of shoddy forensics, coerced confessions, jailhouse snitches, and mistaken witnesses. As long as capital punishment exists, even one small mistake can be deadly.

Fairness in death sentencing is a moving target.

Since 1978, **MARYLAND** has sentenced 63 people to death. Five people have been executed, and six remain on death row. Every death sentence in the state has been reversed at some point, and only those eleven have been reinstated. Even legal experts and courts cannot agree on which cases deserve death. A 2003 University of Maryland study found that both race and geography play a clear role in determining who lives and who dies. Tinker as we will, we will only make the system more complex — not more fair.

The long and complicated process has clogged our courts.

The empty promise of an execution that almost never comes, prolongs the pain of victims' families. Every state cost study ever conducted has found that the death penalty costs millions more than a system of life without parole. **MARYLAND** spends at least \$2 million a year to litigate a single capital case. Every hour spent chasing a handful of executions means countless other crimes go unsolved or unprosecuted while the criminals who committed them roam free.

Today, we can lock people away for life.

MARYLAND did not offer the alternative of life without parole when the death penalty was reinstated in 1978, but now we have that option. It is a severe punishment that keeps defendants behind bars until they die. To be meaningful, justice must be both swift and sure. The death penalty has turned out to be neither.

Marylanders are ready.

The mounting evidence of waste, inaccuracy, and bias has shattered public confidence in the criminal justice system. Nearly two-thirds of Marylanders want to substitute the death penalty with life without parole, and Governor Martin O'Malley agrees. Across the country, states are reconsidering their death penalty statutes and public support for death has plummeted. The death penalty is dying. Marylanders are ready to see it go.