

18 May 2000

NEWS FLASH

USA

NEW HAMPSHIRE SENATE VOTES TO ABOLISH DEATH PENALTY

Today's 14-10 vote in the New Hampshire Senate to abolish the death penalty in the state is a positive step towards the eradication of this cruel and outdated punishment, Amnesty International said.

The bill will now be passed to the Governor of New Hampshire, Jeanne Shaheen, who can sign it into law, allow it to pass into law without her signature, or veto it. She has five days to make her decision.

"As more and more people inside the USA become increasingly concerned about their country's accelerating use of judicial killing, the Senate's vote sends an important message that there is an alternative to the death penalty." Amnesty International said. "We urge the Governor to endorse that message."

Background

The abolition bill had been approved by the New Hampshire House of Representatives on 9 March 2000. It was the first time that a state legislature had passed such a bill since the USA resumed executions in 1977.

Public debate about the USA's accelerating use of the death penalty has been growing since the Governor of Illinois suspended executions in his state because of its "shameful" record of wrongful convictions in capital cases on 31 January.

ENDS.../

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW