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Vote to Remove Death Penalty in Connecticut shows ‘great leadership’

A vote to repeal the death penalty by Connecticut’s State Senate is a leap forward in the battle to end capital punishment, Amnesty International said.

The vote was passed after ten and a half hours of debate by 20 votes to 16. If approved by the House of Representatives and signed by Governor Malloy, Connecticut would become the 17th state in the United States to abolish the death penalty.

“Connecticut’s lawmakers have done the right thing and shown great leadership on advancing human rights in that state,” said Suzanne Nossel, executive director, Amnesty International USA.

“Ninety-seven countries worldwide – and nearly a third of all U.S. states – have now abandoned the death penalty. By joining their ranks Connecticut would contribute to the momentum that will make this cruel and irreversible punishment a thing of the past.”

“We urge the Connecticut House of Representatives to pass this bill swiftly and send it to Governor Malloy for his signature.”

Amnesty International said ending the death penalty will free resources in Connecticut to be directed toward policies that truly prevent crime and support the needs of crime victims and their families.

“These funds can be better spent to address crime and offer support to victims, rather than on bankrolling a punishment that has been rejected by more than 140 countries and 16 U.S. states,” said Suzanne Nossel.

Studies show that capital punishment in Connecticut is plagued by bias and imposed in an arbitrary way. The relatives of 179 murder victims signed a letter of support for the bill.

Amnesty International’s annual report on the death penalty worldwide showed this year that only a handful of countries – China, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the USA – account for the largest number of executions.

Death sentences in the USA have plunged in the last decade to historic lows, largely due to the public’s increased awareness about glaring flaws inherent to capital punishment. One hundred and forty people on death row in the USA have been exonerated since 1973.