

15 January 1998

Further information on EXTRA 37/97 (AMR 51/13/97, 17 March 1997) and follow-up (AMR 51/20/97, 14 April) - Death Penalty

USA (IOWA) Possible reintroduction of the death penalty

A bill proposing the reintroduction of the death penalty in Iowa is likely to be debated and voted upon by the Iowa legislature in the immediate future. The last execution in Iowa was in 1963. The state abolished the death penalty in 1965.

It is believed that there is no clear majority in favour of the death penalty in the legislature and that the vote will be very close. It appears that some have not yet decided how to vote and may be influenced by national and international lobbying.

Thirty-eight of the 50 US states have legislation allowing for the use of the death penalty; 29 have carried out executions in the last 30 years and 34 have prisoners under sentences of death. There has been a total of 432 executions in the USA since 1977. The death penalty also exists under US federal law and US military law but neither jurisdiction has carried out any executions since the 1960s.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send urgent appeals by fax, e-mail or express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing sympathy for the victims of crimes and their families;
- expressing deep concern, however, that Iowa is considering reinstating the death penalty and urging senators to vote against its reintroduction for the following reasons:

- * there is no evidence to suggest that the death penalty has a unique deterrent effect on violent crime; many of the US states that carry out executions have far higher violent crime rates than those that do not;
- * alternative severe punishments which remove violent offenders from society, for example life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, are already available to courts in Iowa;
- * the international trend is away from the use of the death penalty;
- * the death penalty is irrevocable, and is brutalizing to all involved in its application.

APPEALS TO:

Please write to as many of the following State Representatives as possible:

Democrats

Polly Bukta, Michael Cataldo, Dennis Cohoon, John Connors, Bill Dotzler, Steve Falck, Marcella Frevert, Geri Huser, Richard Larkin, Norman Mundie, Steve Richardson, Roger Thomas, Wesley Whitehead, Philip Wise

Republicans

Effie Lee Bogess, Cecil Dolecheck, Mona Martin, Beverly Nelson

The Honorable [Representative's name]
House Chamber
State Capitol Building
Des Moines
IA 50319, USA
Faxes: +1 515 284 4394
Salutation: Dear (name)

You may also use the State Representatives' e-mail address:

name_surname@legis.state.ia.us
Eg: polly_bukta@legis.state.ia.us

Please also write to the following Iowa senators:

Sen. Charles Grassley (R)
Sen. Tom Harkin (D)

The Honorable [Senator's name]
Senate Chamber Capital Building
Des Moines, IA 50319, USA
Faxes (Democrats):+1 515 242 6108
Faxes (Republicans):+1 515 242 5069
Salutation: Dear Senator

You may also use the senators' e-mail addresses:

chuck_grassley@grassley.senate.gov
tom_harkin@harkin.senate.gov

COPIES TO:

The Honorable Terry E. Branstad
Governor of Iowa
State Capitol Building
Des Moines
IA 50319, USA
Faxes: +1 515 281 6611

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your Section office, if sending appeals after 16 February 1998.