

EXTERNAL

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Death Penalty

17 March 1997

**USA (IOWA) POSSIBLE REINTRODUCTION OF THE DEATH PENALTY**

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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 the vote will be very close. It appears that some senators have not yet decided how to vote and may be influenced by national and international lobbying.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Thirty-eight of the 50 US states have legislation allowing for the use of the death penalty; 27 have carried out executions in the last 30 years and 34 have prisoners under sentences of death. The death penalty also exists under US federal law and US military law but no executions have been carried out under either of the federal authorities jurisdictions since the 1960s. The USA has carried out 368 executions since 1977.

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.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send urgent appeals by telegram, telex, 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 acts as a deterrent to violent crime; many of the US states that carry out executions have far higher violent crime rates than those that do not;
- \* courts in Iowa can protect society from violent offenders by sentencing those convicted of violent crimes to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole;
- \* the international trend is away from the use of the death penalty;
- \* executions are a violation of the right to life.

**APPEALS TO:** please write to as many of the following Iowa senators as possible:

**Democrats:** Don Gettings, Rod Halvorson, Steven Hansen, Matt McCoy.

**Republicans:** Jim Lind, Mary Lundby, Don Redfern, John Redwine.

The Honorable [*Senator's name*]  
Senate Chamber Capital Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319, USA

**Fax (Democrats): +1 515 242 6108**

**Fax (Republicans): +1 515 242 5069**

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

Don Gettings: don\_gettings@legis.state.ia.us

Rod Halvorson: rod\_halvorson@legis.state.ia.us  
Steven Hansen: steven\_hansen@legis.state.ia.us  
Jim Lind: jim\_lind@legis.state.ia.us  
Mary Lundby: mary\_lundby@legis.state.ia.us  
Don Redfern: don\_redfern@legis.state.ia.us  
John Redwine: john\_redwine@legis.state.ia.us  
Matt McCoy: matt\_mccoy@legis.state.ia.us

**COPIES TO:**

The Honorable Terry E. Branstrad  
Governor of Iowa  
State Capital Building  
Des Moines  
IA 50319, USA  
**Fax: +1 515 281 6611**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 April 1997.