



ALPHA RESOLUTION

2009-04 Opposition to the Death Penalty in Alaska

WHEREAS, House Bill 9 was pre-filed for the 26th Legislature – First Session to allow imposition of the death penalty in Alaska for certain state crimes; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Territorial Legislature abolished capital punishment in 1957 in a measure stating, “The death penalty is and shall hereafter be abolished as punishment in Alaska for the commission of any crime.”;ⁱ and

WHEREAS, the wrongful execution of an innocent person is an injustice that can never be rectified. Since the reinstatement of the death penalty nationally, at least 124 men and women have been released from death row nationally;ⁱⁱ and

WHEREAS, since 1977, blacks and whites have been victims of murders in almost equal numbers, yet 80% of the people executed in that period were convicted of murders involving white victims;ⁱⁱⁱ and

WHEREAS, in jurisdictions outside Alaska, people of color comprise 43% of total executions since, 1976, while comprising only around 25% of the population;^{iv}

WHEREAS, in Alaska, eighteen (18) percent of Alaska’s total population is American Indians and Alaska Natives^v yet represent 30-40% of the state’s inmate population at any given point in time;^{vi} and

WHEREAS, access for the majority of Alaska Natives and people residing in rural areas of the State of Alaska do not have the means to acquire adequate legal defense counsel when charged with serious crimes;^{vii} and

WHEREAS, there is no evidence to indicate with any persuasiveness that capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime any more than long term prison sentences;^{viii} and

WHEREAS, more that 128 nations worldwide have abandoned the capital punishment in law or in practice. Year after year only three countries execute more prisoners than the USA - China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia;^{ix} and

WHEREAS the Alaska Public Health Association is committed to promoting sound health policy, reducing health disparities and improving health outcomes for Alaskans,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association is opposed to the enactment of the death penalty in the State of Alaska, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Alaska Public Health Association urges the members of the Alaska State Legislature, to oppose any effort to enact the death penalty in Alaska, including but not limited to House bill 9 (HB 9).

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- i Green, Melissa S., compiler. (1998-2009). *Focus on the Death Penalty* (website). Justice Center, University of Alaska Anchorage. <<http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/death/>> (accessed 9/2009). A resolution of the Anchorage Municipal Assembly in opposition to instituting the death penalty in Alaska. AR No. 2009-55.
<http://www.muni.org/Departments/Assembly/legislation/2009%20Resolutions/ar2009-055.pdf>
- ii National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. <http://www.ncadp.org/index.cfm?content=5>
- iii National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. <http://www.ncadp.org/index.cfm?content=5>
- iv “Race and the Death Penalty” American Civil Liberties Union, February 26, 2003.
- v State of Alaska, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 2005 population estimates.
http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/bvs/PDFs/2005/annual_report/2005_App_H_web.pdf
- vi Blurton, DM and Copus, GD. *The Prison Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 1, 90-104 (2003) <http://tpj.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/83/1/90>
- vii Alaska Federation of Natives, Resolution 09-01 Opposing the Reinstatement of the Death Penalty in Alaska,
http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_documents.asp?session=26&docid=1228
- viii National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. <http://www.ncadp.org/index.cfm?content=5>
- ix National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. <http://www.ncadp.org/index.cfm?content=5>