

P R E S S A D V I S O R Y

For Immediate Release

March 9, 2011

Contact: Stefanie Faucher, 415-243-0143 or stefanie@deathpenalty.org

Illinois Governor Signs bill to repeal the death penalty

Bipartisan action part of growing national trend away from the death penalty

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed a bill today to repeal the death penalty and reallocate funds currently spent on defending individuals facing capital punishment to provide law enforcement with training and services to the families of homicide victims. This makes Illinois the fourth state in the country to repeal the death penalty since 2005, following New York, New Jersey, and New Mexico. A total of 16 states and the District of Columbia no longer use the death penalty.

The Illinois House passed the bill by a vote of 60-55 on January 6, and the Illinois Senate passed the bill 32-25 on January 11. Both votes were bipartisan.

Lance Lindsey, Executive Director of Death Penalty Focus said, "Illinois has had a moratorium on executions for ten years, created two study commissions, and passed dozens of reforms to try and make the death penalty work. But the system continued to make mistakes while costing millions of dollars and dragging victims' families through an endless ordeal. Governor Quinn had the wisdom to recognize that the system could not be fixed."

Illinois was the first state to impose a moratorium on executions in January 2000, sparking a new national conversation on the death penalty that has continued throughout the decade.

Former Alameda County prosecutor Darryl Stallworth said, "Today Governor Quinn set an example for the nation by affirming that the death penalty is failed public policy that hurts victims' families and drains resources from more effective public safety programs. Governor Jerry Brown should follow his lead."

"California's death penalty system is just as flawed as Illinois' and it will cost taxpayers more than \$1 billion over the next five years. Replacing the death penalty with a sentence of life without parole will save our state hundreds of millions of dollars each year and ensure that no innocent people are ever executed," stated Stefanie Faucher, Associate Director of Death Penalty Focus.

"Life without possibility of parole is a better alternative that provides real justice. It allows us to punish criminals, protect our communities, and save hundreds of millions of dollars that we can invest in education for our children," stated Natasha Minsker, Director of Death Penalty Policy for the ACLU of Northern California.

Illinois' action comes on the heels of a new national report by the Death Penalty Information Center that found executions and death sentences at an all time low in 2010. Bills to abolish the death penalty are currently being considered in several states, including: Montana, Maryland, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas and Washington.

A July 2010 Field Poll revealed that 42 percent of Californians preferred a sentence of life in prison without parole for individuals convicted of first-degree murder, while just 41 percent chose the death penalty.

Death Penalty Focus is a national non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public about the death penalty and its alternatives. Founded in 1988, the organization is based in San Francisco. For more information, visit: www.deathpenalty.org.

For the Illinois perspective: Jeremy Schroeder, Executive Director, Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, 312-213-4142 or jeremy@icadp.org

###