



Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

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ANOTHER BLACK EYE FOR Pennsylvania's DEATH PENALTY

(York PA) Today the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Mr. James A. Dennis, who was convicted and sentenced to death in October of 1992 for the murder of Chedell Williams, a Philadelphia high school student. The court ruled that Dennis was denied a fair trial because the prosecution suppressed evidence of his innocence. In fact, Senior Justice Marjorie Rendell went so far as to say that the suppressed evidence " ...effectively gutted the Commonwealth's case against Dennis."

The following quote can be attributed to Kathleen Lucas, Executive Director of Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty:

"Once again, the courts have had to clean up the mess we have made for ourselves. This case confirms our worst fears -- that innocent people may be sentenced to death and executed. Prosecutors deliberately hid several pieces of evidence that suggested all along that they knew someone else was guilty. The fact that it's taken 25 years to address this extreme prosecutorial misconduct is precisely why the death penalty doesn't work. This case should send a strong message that it is time for the death penalty to go."

A 2015 Pennsylvania public opinion poll showed that more than half of those questioned support a moratorium on executions. Senator Daylin Leach has re-introduced a bill that would end the use of the death penalty in the Commonwealth.

"If the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is going to take the irrevocable step of executing a human being, its capital sentencing system must be infallible. Pennsylvania's system is riddled with flaws, making it error prone, expensive, and anything but infallible."

—Governor Tom Wolf, announcing moratorium on executions in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is one of the only states in the northeast that still retains capital punishment. Across the country, states have tried and failed to fix the inherent flaws in the system. We look forward to the day when our Commonwealth will join the rest of the civilized world and abandon the practice.

To speak about the state of the death penalty in Pennsylvania, contact Kathleen Lucas at KLucas@padp.org or 717-236-4840

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