

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 14

WHEREAS, the state of Missouri has executed 353 people since becoming a state, and 47 more currently sit on death row; and

WHEREAS, a team assembled by the American Bar Association, in its review of the death penalty in Missouri, found the state in compliance with only 9 out of 95 best practices to ensure that innocent people are not executed; and

WHEREAS, several people have been wrongfully convicted of murder in the state because of eyewitness misidentification, false confessions, and untruthful jailhouse informant testimony; and

WHEREAS, other states, including Illinois in 2011, have abolished the death penalty and noted the significant number of people on death row who were later found innocent; and

WHEREAS, the state's deputy public defender has testified that abolishing the death penalty would alleviate attorney shortages within the state's public defender system without the need for additional appropriations because staff members currently assigned to capital cases could be reassigned to other divisions; and

WHEREAS, death penalty cases cost the underfunded Missouri state public defender system 7 to 10 times more to defend than other murder cases; and

WHEREAS, a comparison of the costs of death penalty cases to other murder cases in the state of Kansas found that costs of adjudicating the death penalty cases exceeded the costs of other homicide cases by 70 percent; and

WHEREAS, a study in Florida determined the state would save \$51 million each year if it abolished the death penalty; and

WHEREAS, the death penalty has been ranked by a national survey of police chiefs as the least effective tool for reducing violent crime and eighty-eight percent of criminologists have found the death penalty does not curtail incidents of murder; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive study of the costs of the death penalty is necessary to determine how much this ineffective public policy is costing the state of Missouri in these times of significant budgetary shortages; and

WHEREAS, Section 23.170, RSMo, requires the Oversight Division of the Committee on Legislative Research to conduct audits as directed by any concurrent resolution duly adopted by the General Assembly:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Missouri Senate, Ninety-seventh General Assembly, First Regular Session, the House of Representatives concurring therein, hereby direct the Oversight Division of the Committee on Legislative Research to study the costs, both direct and indirect, born by county and state governments in the prosecution and defense of at least ten cases filed on or after January 1, 1990, in which a death sentence was sought and was imposed and compare such costs to the costs of an equal number of first degree murder cases filed on or after January 1, 1990, in which a death sentence was not sought and the defendant was sentenced to life without the possibility for parole, and an equal number of first degree murder cases filed on or after January 1, 1990, in which a death sentence was sought, but the defendant was sentenced to life without the possibility for parole at the conclusion of a sentencing phase. The comparison shall include, as estimated by the Oversight Division to be related to the cases, the costs of staff salaries, benefits, contracts for assistance, and operating expenses for: the attorney general's office; the department of corrections, including costs related to housing inmates sentenced to death and carrying out the death penalty; prosecuting and circuit attorneys, including expenses in preparing for the presentation of aggravating and mitigating circumstances with respect to sentencing proceedings in death penalty cases, expert witness fees, and additional investigations;

the Missouri state public defender system; and the supreme court, courts of appeals, and circuit courts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Missouri Senate be instructed to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution to the Oversight Division of the Committee on Legislative Research.

Resolution

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