

## **R2017-01: In Support of the Abolishment of the Death Penalty in Ohio**

**Resolved**, that the Diocese of Southern Ohio affirm publicly The Episcopal Church's longstanding call to put an end to the death penalty, in recognition that the death penalty remains legal in Ohio; *and be it further*

**Resolved**, that this resolution be forwarded to the Governor of Ohio and state representatives of constituencies within the Diocese, encouraging them to support legislation introduced to the Ohio Senate in March 2017 (Senate Bill 94) and October 2017 (House Bill 389) to abolish the death penalty in Ohio; *and be it further*

**Resolved**, that this resolution urge the Bishop Diocesan of Southern Ohio to fulfill the guidance of General Convention resolution 2015-D025, reporting back on his actions to the Standing Commission on Justice and Public Policy prior to the 79th General Convention.

### **Explanation**

Reaffirming the General Convention's longstanding call for the abolition of the death penalty is a faithful witness to the example of Jesus' life and death, in a state where patterns of racial discrimination, inadequate legal representation, and disregard of mental health have been proven in death sentencing.<sup>1</sup> Ohio resumed executions in July 2017 after a three-and-a-half year hiatus, with 27 people currently scheduled for execution by 2022, and 111 awaiting execution dates.<sup>2</sup>

1 Recommendations of the Supreme Court of Ohio Joint Task Force on the Administration of Ohio's Death Penalty

(2011) <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/Boards/deathPenalty/resources/finalReport.pdf>; more...

2 [https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/Ohio Executions Scheduled for 2017-2022](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/Ohio%20Executions%20Scheduled%20for%202017-2022); <http://www.drc.ohio.gov/death-row>

3 <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-status?id=GA132-SB-94>; <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-status?id=GA132-HB-389>

4 [https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=2015-D025](https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=2015-D025)

Recent proposed legislation (SB 94 and HB 389) would abolish the death penalty in the state of Ohio.<sup>3</sup>

General Convention resolution 2015-D025 encourages bishops “to appoint task forces of clergy and lay persons to develop a witness to eliminate the death penalty, and requesting that these bishops report back on their actions to the Standing Commission on Justice and Public Policy prior to the 79th General Convention.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Impact on formation and mission**

Speaking out against the injustice of the death penalty in our state joins us with ecumenical and interreligious partners in Ohio and beyond, including the Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church (among others), and follows the teaching of the Christ who rejected the ancient custom of repaying violence with violence (Matthew 5:38-39), and who was Himself executed. As Christians in the Episcopal Church we best fulfill our ministry to each other and to our neighbors when we “resist evil” and “respect the dignity of every human being” while “proclaim[ing] by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.” (Baptismal Covenant, BCP pages 304-305).

### **Impact on budget**

This resolution will not have an impact on the Diocese’s budget. All communication with lawmakers in Ohio and mailings to communicate opposition for the death penalty and support for Senate Bill 94 and House Bill 389 will be done under the auspices of the Diocesan Public Policy office. The task force to bear witness to eliminate the death penalty will be peopled by volunteers, and the task force’s maintenance will be a voluntary endeavor.

### **Submitted by:**

Jacob Cunliffe and the Rev. Richard Burnett, Trinity Episcopal Church Columbus

Social Justice & Public Policy Commission

The Rev. Deniray Mueller, Legislative Liaison

The Rev. Maggie Leidheiser-Stoddard, St. John’s Worthington

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- [3] <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-status?id=GA132-SB-94>
- [4] [https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution\\_complete.pl?resolution=2015-D025](https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution_complete.pl?resolution=2015-D025)