



Virginia's Death Penalty

What are the facts?

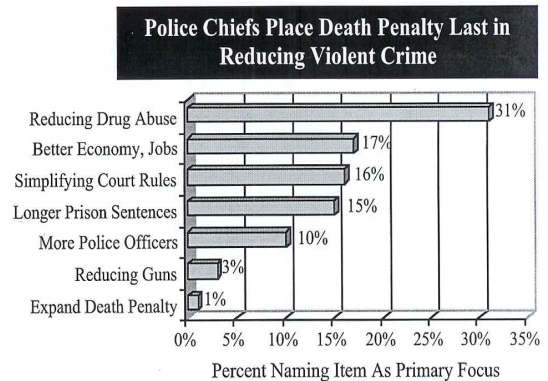
Innocent People May Die

- ❖ Since 1973, **159 people on death row have been exonerated** while 1,456 have been executed. **That is at least one innocent person on death row for every nine executions!**
- ❖ Just days before Earl Washington Jr. was to be executed, Virginia allowed DNA evidence to be examined which proved his innocence. However, the vast majority of capital cases have no biological evidence to test.

It Does Not Deter Crime

A study of leading criminologists published in June 2009 in Northwestern University School of Law's *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* found:

- 88% of the country's top criminologists do not believe the death penalty acts as a deterrent to homicide.
- 87% percent of the expert criminologists believe that death penalty abolition would not have any significant effect on murder rates.
- 75% of the respondents agree that "debates about the death penalty distract Congress and state legislatures from focusing on real solutions to crime problems."



A 1995 Hart Research Poll of police chiefs in the US put the death penalty last (at 1%) in identifying items that reduce violent crime.

The Death Penalty Is Too Expensive

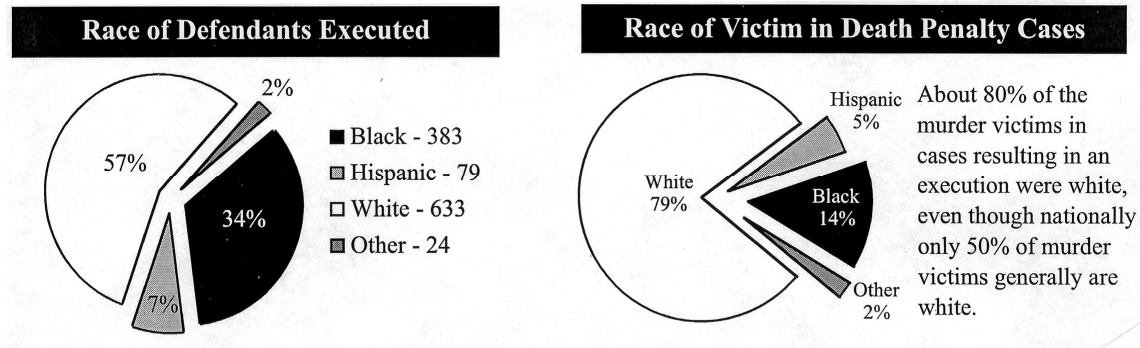
No cost study has yet been done in VIRGINIA. Those that have studied the cost found irrefutable data that **the death penalty costs taxpayers more than life imprisonment:**

- In CALIFORNIA the current system costs **\$137 million per year**; it would cost **\$11.5 million** for a system without the death penalty. ([*California Commission for the Fair Administration of Justice*, July 2008](#))
- In KANSAS, the costs of capital cases are **70% more expensive** than comparable non-capital cases, including the costs of incarceration. (Kansas Performance Audit Report, December 2003)
- NORTH CAROLINA taxpayers spend **\$2.16 million per execution** over the costs of sentencing murderers to life imprisonment. (Duke University, May 1993)
- In FLORIDA **\$51 million per year** is spent above what it would cost to punish all 1st-degree murderers with life without parole. (Palm Beach Post, January 2000)
- In MARYLAND death penalty cases cost **3 times more** than non-death penalty cases, or \$3 million for a single case. (*Urban Institute, The Cost of the Death Penalty in Maryland*, March 2008)

The greatest costs associated with the death penalty occur prior to and during trial, not in post-conviction proceedings. Even if all post-conviction proceedings (appeals) were abolished, the death penalty would *still be more expensive* than alternative sentences.

Race Plays A Role

Researchers in Virginia found that a person is **over three times as likely to be sentenced to death when the victim is white** vs. when the victim is black (*Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of Capital Punishment*).



Geography Determines Execution Rates

Since 1977, about **90% of all US executions have been carried out in the south.**

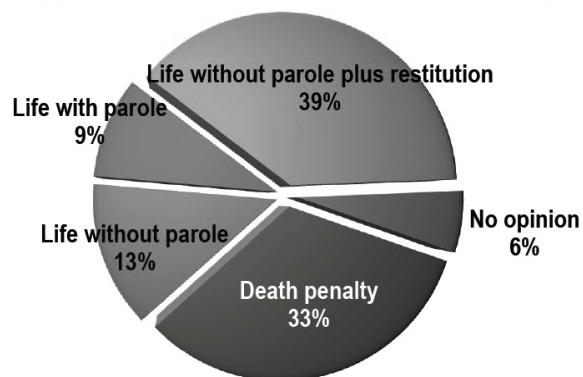
With 113 persons executed since 1982, Virginia is second only Texas in the number of people executed in the modern era.

Only 35% of the 133 political jurisdictions in Virginia have had someone executed since 1976. Three jurisdictions have 23% of Virginia's executions. Seven jurisdictions account for 41% of the state's executions!

In Virginia, murder convictions ending in the death penalty are twice as likely in suburban and rural jurisdictions as in urban jurisdictions.

Public Opinion Favors The Alternative

Support for Alternatives to the Death Penalty



- A 2010 poll by Lake Research Partners found that a **clear majority of voters (61%) would choose a punishment other than the death penalty for murder.**

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