

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/04/12/connecticut-legislature-votes-to-replace-the-death-penalty-with-life-in-solitary-confinement/>

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close

Search

close

close

by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | April 12, 2012

Late yesterday, the Connecticut Assembly passed legislation to bring an end to the state's future use of the death penalty. The governor has promised to sign the legislation, making Connecticut the 17th state to repeal capital punishment.

This is, of course, a significant victory for death penalty opponents. But the legislation has two troubling components. [The first](#) is the fact that it will not apply to the 11 men currently on death row. The second is an amendment added last week to the legislation in the Connecticut Senate, where it faced a steeper hurdle. As reported by the Connecticut website [The Day](#):

The House bill is nearly identical to the Senate bill passed last week. It creates new imprisonment standards for future Class A felony murderers convicted of murder with special circumstances, what is currently known as a capital offense.

Under the bill, those convicted must be housed separately from other inmates, subjected to twice-weekly cell searches and must change their cells every three months. They would get no more than two hours a day outside their cells and would be allowed only non-contact visitation privileges.

The amendment which can be read in full [here](#) is meant to ensure that prisoners who might previously have received the death penalty will serve life without parole in 22-hour-a-day solitary confinement, in conditions that mimic death row. In pledging to sign the bill, Governor Dannel Malloy stated: Going forward, we will have a system that allows us to put these people away for life, in living conditions none of us would want to experience. Let's throw away the key and have them spend the rest of their natural lives in jail.

Even for steadfast opponents of long-term solitary confinement, it would be difficult to argue that this is not the lesser of two evils. But it is an evil nonetheless, in that it replaces death penalty with a lifetime in conditions that are widely considered to constitute torture. It also risks spreading the use of life in solitary confinement beyond what would originally have been capital cases which is effectively what happened with [life without parole](#).

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, Blood in the Face. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets [@solitarywatch](#).

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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These lawmakers need to pull their heads out of the sand ~ this isolation for those convicted is most inhuman and the most expensive method of incarceration except for the death penalty. It may be the lesser of the two evils for the lawmakers and the misinformed public but its worse for those put in these boxes for the rest of their lives without a chance of ever going down on custody because of the new law.

This is a fine example of two steps forward four steps back.. It appears that only education and awareness of solitary confinement is the answer to avoid such alternatives but until then, the legislators will keep making the same mistakes over and over until they realize they cant fund such confinement costs AND the loss of human lives is the ultimate result of such ideologies of politicians imposing and increasing the use of solitary confinement where it does not increase, assure or even reduce any threat to public safety.

These prisoners need a management tool to work their way down even if it is one custody level that allows group interactions contact visits and meaningful programming to keep their brain and body going. One can only pray this law must be repealed soon when these politicians see the impact of such a law and how it impacts human beings sentenced to life without parole and solitary confinement forever.

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