

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/ohio-must-halt-executions>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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COLUMBUS- Today, the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio renewed its call on the state of Ohio to put an immediate stop to all executions in light of troubling findings revealed by the American Bar Association (ABA). In its report, the ABA found serious deficiencies in the system that compromise defendants ability to receive a fair trial and also found that race, class and geography play a role in who is given the death penalty and who is not.

The ABA study shows what opponents of the death penalty have been saying for years, said ACLU of Ohio Legal Director Jeffrey Gamso. Defendants often cannot receive a fair trial and there is insufficient protection against innocent people being wrongly convicted and executed.

The system is broken. Officials must stop all executions until these problems are adequately addressed, added Gamso.

Some of the deficiencies in the justice system that the ABA study specifically cites include inadequate procedures to protect the innocent from conviction, inadequate access to experts and investigators, inadequate standards for defense counsel and insufficient compensation for defense counsel. The ABA also cited issues such as execution of those with severe mental disabilities and the cost of execution as opposed to life sentences as other reasons for death penalty reform.

Along with its findings, the ABA issued 14 recommendations to the state of Ohio to address the problems it uncovered. However, the report concludes that since Ohio is unable to guarantee a fair process for defendants, it should put an immediate halt to all executions until fair process can be guaranteed and these problems addressed.

Public support for an end to the death penalty is mounting as well. The ACLU of Ohio, along with Ohioans to Stop Executions and other concerned community groups will sponsor a rally encouraging state officials to end executions. The rally will take place on Wednesday, September 26 at noon in downtown Columbus outside the Statehouse.

The loss of life is the ultimate loss of liberty. Ohio must be sure that the system it has in place for executions is fair and that innocent people will not be harmed. The ABA study shows that is not the case in this state, meaning the only appropriate action for officials is to stop executions until these problems can be addressed, concluded Gamso.

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