



CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS
The Movement To Reclaim Christianity And Transform American Politics

Christian Alliance for Progress: Wisconsin Christians Have Opposed the Death Penalty Since 1846

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At a recent meeting, the Wisconsin Christian Alliance for Progress adopted a statement opposing the Death Penalty Amendment set for November 7th, 2006. The statement, set forth below, urges Christians to be true to their faith tradition and oppose the Amendment. "Wisconsin abolished the death penalty in 1853, and Wisconsin Christians have been leaders in opposing the death penalty since 1846," noted Wisconsin Christian Alliance for Progress state coordinator Jeff Boldt. "It's odd that we haven't heard more about this issue. It's been a traditional Wisconsin value not to take the risk of having our state execute an innocent person--as others are believed to have done. Many states are moving away from this permanent form of punishment."

"I have always been proud that Wisconsin was one of the first states to eliminate the death penalty," said longtime death penalty foe Midge Miller, speaking for the Wisconsin Christian Alliance for Progress. "Since it is wrong for anyone to kill somebody, how can it possibly be right for the state to put people to death?" Miller, a former state representative and missionary to Japan to post-WWII Japan, added, "There are more civilized ways for the state to protect society."



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Statement Opposing the Death Penalty Amendment

As Christians, we oppose the reintroduction of the death penalty in Wisconsin. This would take the state in the wrong direction. In recent years, other states have recognized that the legal justice system does not always get it right and have moved away from the death penalty. We urge voters to reject the death penalty referendum on November 7, 2006. The death penalty will never be the solution to violence in our society.

Wisconsin abolished the death penalty in 1853, and Wisconsin Christians have been leaders in opposing the death penalty since 1846. Christians have long believed that God calls us to a high and often difficult standard of love, forgiveness and justice.

Our faith tradition leads us not to retribution, but toward redemption and forgiveness. Jesus pointedly refused to stone a woman accused of adultery--calling on all of us to be cautious in judging others. The grace of God leaves open the possibility of reform and redemption to even the hardest of hearts.

The criminal justice system is often inequitable and unfair in its implementation. It reflects racism in our society and has been proven to be predisposed to executing the poor and destitute among us.

Because of necessary legal costs, the death penalty is also more costly than life imprisonment. In this way it drains resources that could be used for the promotion of authentic justice and true healing. As we invest in revenge as a society, we divest ourselves of the compassion that God asks of us.

The Wisconsin Christian Alliance for Progress urges residents to reject the death penalty this November.

About the Wisconsin Christian Alliance for Progress

We are a group of over several hundred Christians representing Lutheran, Episcopal, Methodist, UCC, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Unitarian, MCC, and Unity Church members in every area of the state.

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¹ See: *A Brief History of Wisconsin's Death Penalty*, by [Alexander T. Pendleton & Blaine R. Renfert](#), *Wisconsin Lawyer*, 2003 "At the first Wisconsin Constitutional Convention of 1846...the issue of the death penalty was extensively debated. Those speaking in favor of a proposed constitutional provision prohibiting the death penalty argued: (1) The death penalty is a relic of a barbarous age; (2) Juries often refuse to convict otherwise guilty persons when the penalty is death; (3) Public executions "harden" those who witness them, thus making them more susceptible to committing crimes; (4) Since juries are frequently unwilling to convict, or even indict, when the penalty is death, certain elements of the population are more likely to resort to lynching to ensure punishment; (5) The punishment falls disproportionately on the poor; (6) The Bible does not require the death penalty (example given: Cain was exiled, not executed, for the murder of Abel); and (7) A majority of people in Wisconsin supported abolition."