

SB 306 The Elimination of the Death Penalty 2/23/2007
ROY BROWN

My thoughts on the death penalty have gone through an evolution over the years. When I was younger it all seemed so simple. I must confess I could have been described as the “hang ‘em high type.” But things change and so did I.

You have all heard the arguments against the death penalty.

1. With all the legal costs it is more expensive.
2. The courts don’t always treat everyone equally
3. Its not really a deterrent

Yet, if those were the only reasons, I think I would have remained in favor of the death penalty. However, when it comes to the issue of making mistakes... that is where my own philosophy about life really challenged me.

Most of you know I am pro life and I feel life is precious from the womb to a natural death. It is that belief that really made me question the use of capital punishment. My wife has it all neatly figured out in one simple statement. She says “Abortion is the taking of an innocent life. Capital punishment is the taking of a guilty life” That makes a lot of sense and is easy to understand...but is it always a guilty life.....is it always a guilty life???? I guess if that statement were true then I would not be standing here today.

I have to tell you a very short story. Just this week I was trying to find an article that had quoted me so I got on the internet and googled my name. To my surprise I found an article about another Roy Brown and the initial sentence set me back in my chair. “After spending 15 years in a New York prison for murder, Roy Brown has been exonerated through DNA evidence and is now free. Brown is the eighth person in New York in the last 13 months to be exonerated.” Yes mistakes do happen. And there are all kinds of examples of heinous animals that really deserve to be killed. But as long as the death penalty is still allowed there will be mistakes.

Now just so you do not think I have gone completely soft on these heinous criminals, I say lock them up and throw away the key for life without any possibility of parole. No TV, computers, amenities of any kind and they should all have constant electronic monitoring. Frankly killing them is the easy way out for most of these creeps.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee I contend this will be one of the most difficult decisions of this session.

I would agree that the death penalty should continue....

- If it was less expensive than life in prison
- If the courts treated rich and poor equally
- If it truly was a deterrent
- If everyone that was executed was guilty

Unfortunately the sad truth about the death penalty is

Most of the time it's more expensive

Most of the time the courts do not dispense justice equally

Most of the time it is not a deterrent

And sometimes..... yes sometimes they are innocent

Members of the committee, I told you at the beginning how my philosophy about life challenged me to come to this decision. So I challenge you today. Every one that pushes that green button is also saying EVEN A GUILTY LIFE is worth saving. Should not those innocent lives my wife mentioned in that simple statement I mentioned earlier get the same consideration next time you have a vote for them. Those innocent lives are in much greater danger than any one on death row.