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Illinois death penalty ban sent to Gov. Pat Quinn

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By *Todd Wilson and Ray Long* at 11:05 a.m.; **last updated at 3:16 p.m. with roll call links**

SPRINGFIELD --- A historic measure to abolish the death penalty in Illinois passed the state Senate today after ne
The ban on executions goes to Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn, who must sign the legislation for it to become law. Duri
"capital punishment when applied carefully and fairly," but also backs the 10-year-old moratorium on executions. (

The Senate voted 32-25 to approve the ban, with two members voting present. The measure passed the House last
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Sponsoring Sen. Kwame Raoul, D-Chicago, urged his colleagues to "join the civilized world" and end the death pen

Raoul spoke of how authorities were certain when they prosecuted Jerry Hobbs and Kevin Fox for killing their own
were exonerated by DNA evidence. The senator spoke of is 10-year-old daughter and how he could not imagine wh
Illinois "ought to be embarrassed" by its track record of wrongful convictions, Raoul said, "because if an execution
people of Illinois."

Sen. John Millner, R-Carol Stream, a former Elmhurst police chief with experience of interviewing more than 1,000
system before eliminating the death penalty. He also called for more training of police officers, including how to av

"I ask you all, please," Millner said, to consider a crime victim's families.

Sen. Willie Delgado, D-Chicago, a former parole agent, cited how he worked in the attorney general's office when tl
Alejandro Hernandez were examined.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the system is broken," Delgado said. He maintained "death is too good for some folks" and natural life, where they can "rot and think about what they have done."

Sen. Kirk Dillard, a Hinsdale Republican who worked on death penalty reforms now in place, said the people of his and killers of police, prison guards and children.

"I think there's still a place for the death penalty for the worst of the worst of our society," Dillard said.

Dillard and Sen. Bill Haine, an Alton Democrat and former Madison County state's attorney, called for putting the

But Sen. Toi Hutchinson, D-Olympia Fields, said lawmakers are elected to make the tough decisions, and she called with Afghanistan, China, Iran, Iraq, Congo, Saudi Arabia and other countries that allow the death penalty.

"We're here because we've seen countless examples of the fact that the system has failed," Hutchinson said. "This q It's about the people who were convicted who didn't. It's about our system of justice is actually predicated upon the innocent person is too high a price to pay."

Sen. Dan Duffy, R-Lake Barrington, argued that 20 people sent to Death Row in Illinois have been exonerated and an ineffective and expensive use of scarce resources.

"What we have learned after all this time is that the system cannot be fixed," Duffy said.

Sen. Jeff Schoenberg, D-Evanston, said he has long prayed over the death penalty issue but that the system in Illinois broken."

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The action comes 10 years after then-Gov. George Ryan placed a moratorium on the death penalty in Illinois follow Row were later exonerated.

Quinn has not said whether he would sign the ban, but during last year's campaign said the moratorium should stay. Gordon "Randy" Steidl, who spent 17 years in prison, including 12 on Death Row, after he was wrongfully convicted committee to end a death penalty system in Illinois that could have had him executed.

"How can you possibly give the power of life and death to a prosecutor, who even if he does everything correctly, then an innocent person to a gurney?" Steidl said. "And we know we have in this country, we know we have executed in they're executed, the state no longer cares. The evidence is there, we have an alternative, and that's life without parole an innocent person. Because you know sooner or later if we have this system we will."

The panel voted in favor of the proposal despite concerns raised by opponents who cited the need for the death penalty congresswoman in Arizona over the weekend and murder of six people, including a federal judge and a 9-year-old girl backdrop of six Chicago policemen killed over the last year.

Sen. William Haine, a former Madison County state's attorney, argued fervently to keep the death penalty in place. "To call for perfection necessarily involves speculation about a future faulty case." Haine argued. "We have in our 15 Fifteen murderers, that's not speculation. The people of Illinois should be a part of this and we should not be removed

Sponsoring Sen. Kwame Raoul, D-Chicago, said he has confidence that Quinn will come around and sign the bill or convicted former Death Row inmates.

Outside of the hearing room, Raoul choked up and his eyes welled up as he talked about the historic breadth of the means have been used to squeeze defendants into false confessions.

“It’s an emotional debate,” Raoul said, his voice breaking as he took several seconds to gather himself. “I talk to my kids attend Catholic school, and they get their values-based education, and they understand it better than some ad

Thirty-five states now have the death penalty, and Illinois would become the 16th state to not have the death penalty states — New York, New Jersey and New Mexico — have eliminated the death penalty in recent years, according to

Before last week, no abolition legislation had passed either house in Illinois since executions were reinstated in 1972. penalty guidelines in 40 states, including Illinois, in 1972.

Support for abolishing executions in Illinois has grown since Ryan declared the moratorium. His action followed a in the prosecution and defense of Illinoisans facing a death sentence and the exoneration of several people placed c

Illinois followed up with a number of steps to reform the death penalty process, including taping interrogations un when he served in the Illinois Senate. More money was made available to help provide resources to beef up the def the millions of dollars being spent raised additional questions.

Only days before he left office in January 2003, Ryan granted clemency to 164 Death Row inmates even though sou panel recommended clemency for no more than 10.

There are 15 people on Death Row in Illinois, officials said.

Posted at 11:04:10 AM in Legislature