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# Without Fanfare, Malloy Signs Bill Abolishing Death Penalty

by BERNIE DAVIDOW on APRIL 25, 2012 · 2 COMMENTS

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's signature this afternoon has abolished the death penalty for future crimes in Connecticut.

The signing was announced only after the fact.

Malloy had promised to sign the bill, but as recently as Tuesday his office said they had no knowledge of when he would sign it.

About 2:15 p.m., however, his office released this statement:

"This afternoon I signed legislation that will, effective today, replace the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of release as the highest form of legal punishment in Connecticut. Although it is an historic moment – Connecticut joins 16 other states and the rest of the industrialized world by taking this action – it is a moment for sober reflection, not celebration.

"Many of us who have advocated for this position over the years have said there is a moral component to our opposition to the death penalty. For me, that is certainly the case. But that does not mean – nor should it mean – that we question the morality of those who favor capital punishment. I certainly don't. I know many people whom I deeply respect, including friends and family, that believe the death penalty is just. In fact, the issue knows no boundaries: not political party, not gender, age, race, or any other demographic. It is, at once, one of the most compelling and vexing issues of our time.

"My position on the appropriateness of the death penalty in our criminal justice system evolved over a long period of time. As a young man, I was a death penalty supporter. Then I spent years as a prosecutor and pursued dangerous felons in court, including murderers. In the trenches of a criminal courtroom, I learned firsthand that our system

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of justice is very imperfect. While it's a good system designed with the highest ideals of our democratic society in mind, like most of human experience, it is subject to the fallibility of those who participate in it. I saw people who were poorly served by their counsel. I saw people wrongly accused or mistakenly identified. I saw discrimination. In bearing witness to those things, I came to believe that doing away with the death penalty was the only way to ensure it would not be unfairly imposed.

"Another factor that led me to today is the 'unworkability' of Connecticut's death penalty law. In the last 52 years, only 2 people have been put to death in Connecticut – and both of them volunteered for it. Instead, the people of this state pay for appeal after appeal, and then watch time and again as defendants are marched in front of the cameras, giving them a platform of public attention they don't deserve. It is sordid attention that rips open never-quite-healed wounds. The 11 men currently on death row in Connecticut are far more likely to die of old age than they are to be put to death.

"As in past years, the campaign to abolish the death penalty in Connecticut has been led by dozens of family members of murder victims, and some of them were present as I signed this legislation today. In the words of one such survivor: 'Now is the time to start the process of healing, a process that could have been started decades earlier with the finality of a life sentence. We cannot afford to put on hold the lives of these secondary victims. We need to allow them to find a way as early as possible to begin to live again.' Perhaps that is the most compelling message of all.

"As our state moves beyond this divisive debate, I hope we can all redouble our efforts and common work to improve the fairness and integrity of our criminal justice system, and to minimize its fallibility."

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