

Kansas Bishops of
The Episcopal Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Roman Catholic Church, The United Methodist Church

January 28, 2010

To: Representatives, Kansas House of Representatives
Senators, Kansas Senate

Dear Friends,

As bishops leading The Episcopal Church, Roman Catholic Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The United Methodist Church in Kansas, we write to share our deep concern about the continuing practice of condemning persons to death in Kansas. Our churches' official teachings are united in teaching that capital punishment should no longer be practiced or threatened. We are convinced that human life is sacred to God and should be respected by all of humankind, including governments. When governments execute persons, our society is weakened because the value of life is cheapened. All of us are diminished when our state punishes in this way.

We also share a deep concern for all victims of violent crimes and their families. We recommit ourselves to do everything possible to comfort and assist victims and their families as they cope with the aftermath of violence.

We acknowledge that some persons have committed despicable crimes and deserve serious punishment. There are other ways of punishing such persons that fit the crime and still protect society. We believe the death penalty is sometimes applied to innocent persons, that it is applied more often to persons who are poor, and that racial bias far too often affects the judgment being rendered. While our legal system is one of the best in the world, it occasionally makes mistakes, and such mistakes should not be final and irreversible. In difficult economic times, the additional money spent on capital punishment should be redirected to more beneficial causes.

We continue to pray for you to receive wisdom and courage as you lead our state.

Blessings,

James M. Adams, Jr.
The Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas

Paul S. Coakley
Catholic Diocese of Salina

Ronald M. Gilmore
Catholic Diocese of Dodge City

Michael O. Jackels
Catholic Diocese of Wichita

Scott J. Jones
The United Methodist Church

Gerald L. Mansholt
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Joseph F. Naumann
Catholic Archdiocese of Kansas City

Dean E. Wolfe
The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas