

Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

"Execute justice...not people"

Contact: Mark Elliott
Telephone: 727-215-9646
Email: mark@fadp.org

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ANOTHER FLORIDA DEATH ROW EXONERATION How Many Is Too Many?

A Broward County Jury has acquitted Seth Penalver of all charges related to his 1999 murder conviction and death sentence. In 2006, the Florida Supreme Court overturned Penalver's conviction and ordered a new trial. The jury ended its 10th day of deliberations by delivering the acquittals, capping a five-month trial and securing Penalver's freedom after he spent almost half his life in custody. Penalver, who has been jailed since his arrest in the summer of 1994, has been released.

With this decision, Penalver becomes Florida's 24th Exonerated Death Row Prisoner. Florida has far more exonerated Death Row inmates than any other state. The Death Penalty Information Center recognizes Seth Penalver as the 142nd prisoner to be exonerated and freed from Death Row since 1973 and the 24th from Florida.

In January, 2000, some 15 years after his death sentence, Frank Lee Smith died of cancer while on Florida's Death Row. DNA evidence later confirmed his innocence.

Since Florida resumed executions in the 1970's, twenty-four wrongfully convicted Death Row prisoners have been exonerated while seventy-four prisoners have been executed. "That's one exoneration for every three executions," said Mark Elliott, Director of Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, "How many more innocent people will be sentenced to die in Florida before our state leaders realize that this is a fatal problem that cannot be fixed?"

According to the Death Penalty Information Center's latest report, *The Death Penalty in 2012: Year End Report*, Florida now sentences far more people to death than any other state.

This year, Florida has 21 new death sentences out of 78 nationally---that's more than one quarter (26.9%) of ALL new death sentences in the U.S. One small corner of our state, the Jacksonville area, handed down one quarter of all new Florida death sentences. "The state picks up the tab, so areas like Duval County burden all Florida taxpayers with their extreme use of numerous, big-ticket death penalty prosecutions." said Elliott.

While death sentences have dropped dramatically in other states, Florida is expanding use of the death penalty. "It is both tragic and ironic that the state that has sent the highest number of wrongfully convicted people to Death Row is now condemning the most people to death," said Elliott.

"It is time for Governor Scott to act and call a halt to executions to prevent the possible execution of other wrongfully convicted people," said Elliott, "Florida's death penalty system is a hugely expensive,

mistake-ridden government program with no accountability or oversight. It is time to admit it cannot be fixed and end it.”

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Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty is a coalition of individuals and organizations united to abolish the death penalty in Florida.

If you would like more information or to schedule an interview, please contact Mark Elliott at 727-215-9646 or email mark@fadp.org.