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DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER

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STATEMENT BY ROBERT DUNHAM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DEATH PENALTY INFORMATION CENTER ON NEW HAMPSHIRE'S REPEAL OF ITS DEATH-PENALTY STATUTE

- New Hampshire becomes 21st state to abolish the death penalty.
- Half of U.S. states have now either abolished capital punishment or imposed moratoria on executions

Earlier today, the New Hampshire legislature overrode Governor Chris Sununu's veto of a bill to repeal the state's capital punishment statute, becoming the 21st U.S. state to abolish the death penalty. By a vote of 16-8, the state senate completed the override process, joining the state house, which had voted 247-123 on May 23 to override the veto.

The New Hampshire repeal is another example of the continuing movement away from capital punishment in the United States. Nine states have abolished the death penalty in the past fifteen years, and now half of the states in the country have either abolished capital punishment or have imposed moratoria on executions. Most Americans live in states with no active death penalty. The vast majority of American counties have no one on death row and have not executed anyone in the past fifty years. New Hampshire has only one person on death row, whose sentence is not affected by the abolition bill, and has not carried out an execution since 1939.

With New Hampshire's repeal, no state in New England now authorizes capital punishment and the only state in the Northeast that still has a death penalty—Pennsylvania—has a moratorium on executions. The public appetite for the death penalty has declined dramatically nationwide. New death sentences have declined 85% since the mid 1990s and executions have fallen by nearly 75% since 1999. The death penalty remains disproportionately the product of a small number of states in the South and Midwest, practiced mostly by outlier counties that engage in a range of questionable criminal justice practices.

The New Hampshire legislature heard extensive testimony showing that the death penalty hasn't made its citizens or police safer, fails family members whose loved ones have been murdered, makes additional victims out of defendants' family members, and — as the nation's

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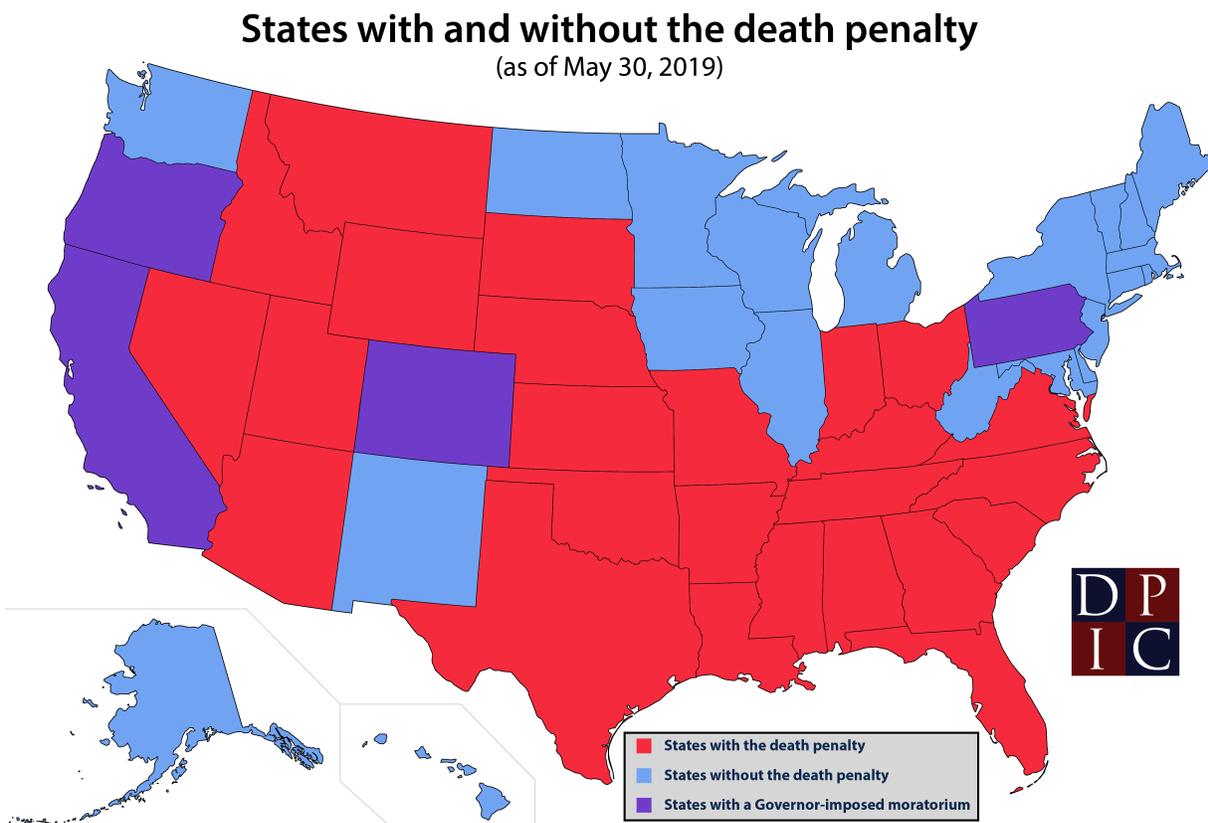
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165 death-row exonerations show —unacceptably places innocent lives at risk. The repeal demonstrates the power of bipartisan policymaking. New Hampshire’s legislators engaged in heartfelt, respectful, and good-faith debate on very sensitive issues and elevated bipartisan policy concerns over partisan political differences. In the end, New Hampshire’s citizens can have confidence that the legislature based its decision on the evidence and what each legislator individually believed in his or her heart was right for the people of the state.

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Below: the new DPIC map of states with and without the death penalty.



The Death Penalty Information Center is a national nonprofit organization serving the media and the public with analysis and information on issues concerning capital punishment. DPIC was founded in 1990 and prepares in-depth reports, issues press releases, conducts briefings for the media, and serves as a resource to those working on this issue. DPIC does not take a position for or against capital punishment itself but has been critical of the manner in which it is administered.