

## Two-thirds of Kentuckians want to keep death penalty

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Jan. 30

courier-journal.com

THE COURIER-JOURNAL BLUEGRASS POLL® is based on surveys conducted Jan. 24-27 with 609 Kentucky registered voters by SurveyUSA. Seventy-two percent of respondents were interviewed on their home telephone in the recorded voice of a professional announcer, while the other 28 percent were shown a questionnaire on their smart phone, tablet or other electronic device.

The margin of error for the poll was plus or minus 3.8 percentage points. In theory, one can say with 96 percent certainty that the results would not vary by more than the stated margin of sampling error, in one direction or the other, had the entire universe of respondents with telephones been interviewed with complete accuracy. Percentages based on subsamples are subject to a higher potential margin of error.

In addition to these sampling errors, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey can also influence the results. Republishing or broadcasting the poll's results without credit to The Courier-Journal is prohibited.

About two-thirds of Kentuckians support the death penalty as an option for murderers and do not want it replaced with a sentence of life in prison without parole, according to the latest Courier-Journal Bluegrass Poll.

Two bills have been proposed in this year's General Assembly - one in the Senate and one in the House - to abolish the death penalty.

About 67 percent of the 609 registered voters surveyed said they continue to support capital punishment in Kentucky, while 26 percent said they'd like to see it abolished. Another 7 percent of those polled said they were not sure about the issue.

Mike Ackerman, a 38-year-old voter from Prestonsburg, said he believes that people don't have a respect for the law these days and the death penalty is fitting for those who commit the most heinous crimes.

"You've taken someone's life and you don't deserve to keep living," Ackerman said. "The way society is today, they don't fear the law."

Despite the 2 to 1 support for the death penalty in the poll, the Rev. Patrick Delahanty, chairman of the Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, said he doesn't believe it is reflective of the sentiment. Delahanty said he believes if the question was asked reflecting the cost of executing prisoners, the risk of wrongful conviction and mistakes made in previous cases, the outcome would be different.

"I don't think that's the reality," Delahanty said of the poll.

Instead, Delahanty said the legislature must consider how the system actually functions. "What we have here is a system that appears to be pretty broken."

The poll asked:

"A bill is before the 2013 Kentucky General Assembly to abolish the death penalty and makes the maximum penalty for murder in Kentucky life in prison without the possibility of parole. Do you support keeping the death penalty as an option? Or do you prefer abolishing it and replacing it with life in prison without parole?"

In 1997, the Bluegrass Poll asked about the death penalty for those convicted of murder without suggesting life in prison as an alternative. In that poll, almost 70 percent of Kentuckians were in favor.

Rep. Carl Rollins, D-Midway, pre-filed a bill in the House and said he hopes it would get a hearing. Sen. Gerald Neal, D-Louisville, also filed a bill in the Senate. That bill has been filed several times before but has never progressed.

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