

New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops



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PRESS RELEASE **New Mexico Repeals Death Penalty**

Santa Fe, New Mexico – Wednesday, March 18, 2009, Immediate Release--We applaud the Governor Bill Richardson who has shown he is listening to New Mexico and agrees with 73% of Roman Catholics in New Mexico that we should repeal the Death Penalty, replace it with Life without Parole and provide restitution to the victims' families.

Pope Benedict XVI and his predecessor Pope John Paul II have called for the end to the use of the death penalty as a sign of greater respect for all human life, and we are proud to stand with the Governor on this historic day in New Mexico.

This legislation helps us create a culture of life in our country and follows the consistent ethic of life we practice.

Governor Richardson has made New Mexico a leader in turning away from the death penalty with all its moral problems and issues of fairness and justice. We cannot teach that killing is wrong by killing those who kill.

That one more day a prisoner lives may be the one day that he arrives at repentance, finds redemption, asks for forgiveness, or if innocent, is rendered justice. Life without parole renders the prisoner harmless to society, and that is part of what our teachings tell us that we should strive for—protection for society and respect for all life.

We ask that all New Mexicans not forget and keep in prayer the victims of heinous crimes and their families, especially their parents. There is a second piece of legislation “HB211 and HB284” being considered by our state lawmakers that calls for the restitution and support for victims' families.

The US Bishops statement “A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death,” cites the following:

Our nation should forgo the use of the death penalty because:

- *The sanction of death, when it is not necessary to protect society, violates respect for human life and dignity.*
- *State-sanctioned killing in our names diminishes all of us.*

- *Its application is deeply flawed and can be irreversibly wrong, is prone to error, and is biased by factors such as race, the quality of legal representation, and where the crime was committed.*
- *We have other ways to punish criminals and protect society.*

Our witness to respect life shines most brightly when we demand respect for each and every human life, including the life of those who fail to show that respect for others. The antidote to violence is love, not more violence. Contact: Allen Sanchez, Executive Director, NMCCB.