



General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Joint State Government Commission
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Released: June 25, 2018

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN PENNSYLVANIA:
The Report of the Task Force and Advisory Committee

Report Summary

Senate Resolution No. 6 (Sess. of 2011) called for a study of the contemporary capital punishment system in the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania is among the 31 states and the federal government that authorize capital punishment. During the last four decades in Pennsylvania, hundreds of murderers have been convicted and condemned to death; however, there have been only three executions.

This study follows others on the same or related topics, including those conducted by the American Bar Association and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System. The SR6 report is the culmination of work done by the Justice Center for Research at The Pennsylvania State University, the Interbranch Commission on Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness, and an advisory committee comprised of judges, public defenders, district attorneys, victim advocates, inmate advocates, clergy, law enforcement officials, and other expert stakeholders.

After its initial conference, the advisory committee divided into subcommittees to generate material for the 17 subjects covered in the report. The subcommittee on impact collaboratively developed material relating to cost, impact on and services for family members, secondary trauma, length and conditions of confinement on death row, and public opinion. The subcommittee on policy collaboratively developed material relating to bias and unfairness, proportionality, mental illness, penological intent, and alternatives. The subcommittee on procedure collaboratively developed material relating to mental retardation, juries, state appeals and postconviction, clemency, innocence, counsel, and lethal injection.

The full report is available on our website, <http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/>