

Iowans Against the Death Penalty

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No News Is Good News

[Senate File 357](#), a bill that would create a “capital murder offense by establishing the penalty of death for murder in the first-degree offenses involving kidnapping and sexual abuse offenses against the same victim who is a minor,” remains eligible for debate in the Iowa Senate. It must be debated within the next two weeks and come out of a House committee in order to be alive for the remainder of this session. The odds are dwindling.

The chance of debating SF 357 become slimmer over the next two weeks. However, in the Iowa General Assembly, anything can happen without much notice, and often does. We'll send out a notice as soon as we can if there is an indication that this bill will move.

The cost in Iowa

There is no doubt that sentencing someone to death, even if that person is not executed, will cost the state resources it doesn't have. A recent [fiscal note](#) by the [Fiscal Services Division](#) of the nonpartisan [Legislative Services Agency](#), estimates the cost of this bill's enactment will require over \$5,000,000. An immediate cost of \$3,300,000 to build an execution facility must be secured before the act's effective date (the bill takes effect on January 1, 2024).

The date will need to be amended since a \$3.3 million execution facility could not be constructed in that time. Before ground is broken, architects will need to know how many cells to build into the facility. Will there be a need for male/female/non-binary separation? Will the law be expanded in the future that will require more than enough single cells to house the expected additional offenders?

We encourage you to read the fiscal note. It contains five pages of pertinent information, and a few questionable assumptions. For instance, there is an estimated savings of \$97,000 based upon “the difference between supervising an individual in prison until the point of execution versus a life sentence.” If that doesn't make your head spin it will, at least, make you scratch it.

Do you know?

Do you know your senator and representative's position on the death penalty? If not, email us a request and we'll let you know the information we have on your particular legislators. Email your request to info@iowansagainsthedeathpenalty.org and include your address and zip code.

Helpful Hints

You should ask your legislator(s) if he/she would vote to oppose any death penalty bill. If your legislator responds with “I don’t think there will be a death penalty bill debate this year,” or some similar reply, let them know that that is not the question you asked. Ask again: “Would you oppose any bill in the Iowa Legislature that reinstated the death penalty?” An answer that is vague, such as, “I will keep your concerns in mind as this legislation comes up,” is an unacceptable answer. If you receive a vague answer from your legislator, call the switchboard and ask to leave a message for your legislator to return a call. The Senate Switchboard number is (515) 281-3371. The House Switchboard number is (515) 281-3221.

You are the constituent; you are the legislator’s boss; the person to whom the legislator is elected to represent. You have every right to expect a definitive answer. Be respectful, but firm.

More information

It’s been eighteen years since a person has been convicted of a crime such as that described in SF 357. The last person convicted of this crime is serving two “consecutive” life sentences in the state penitentiary. It could have been three consecutive sentences. Consecutive means that if one of those life sentences is overturned (unlikely), he will have to serve the other life sentence. In Iowa, life means life. There is no parole for a person serving life. They will serve their sentence until they die. In effect; a death penalty.

There have been two similar instances where young girls were kidnapped, raped, and murdered. The murder of two young cousins from Evansdale remains unsolved. In the other case, the suspect killed himself before he could be apprehended. A death penalty would have saved none of these young victims. Their perpetrators were hell-bent on committing those crimes.

About IADP

Iowans Against the Death Penalty is a single-issue organization established in 1962. We were instrumental in the repeal of the state’s death penalty law in 1965, and IADP has worked vigilantly to resist efforts to reinstate it over the years.

Funds are necessary to run any organization. While IADP operates entirely with volunteers, it costs money to maintain a website, to print and mail materials, and to organize events.

IADP is dedicated to expanding its presence in Iowa. If you are affiliated with a community college, university, youth group, high school, church, or any other group that would be interested in hosting a meaningful discussion, we would love to hear from you. Please let us know and we will respond accordingly as soon as possible.

Your membership in IADP

