

1-1-2010

2010 Referendum Question

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Recommended Citation

"2010 Referendum Question" (2010). *CACTUS--Citizens' Assembly for Critical Thinking About the United States*. Paper 5.
<http://encompass.eku.edu/cactus/5>

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2010 Referendum Question

The student members of the 2010 Citizens' Assembly for Critical Thinking about the United States (CACTUS) have studied and deliberated about the death penalty all semester, considering whether to recommend keeping, changing, or abolishing the death penalty in the United States. Having reached agreement on a recommendation for action, the Assembly hereby invites all members of the University community to vote on whether to implement the following recommendation:

By a final vote of 28 to 7 the Assembly recommends that the United States Congress seek by law to abolish use of the death penalty in the United States, encouraging discontinuance of its use in all states that have not yet abolished the death penalty through such incentives as the Congress may determine, and dispensing with its use by the Federal Government of the United States, in accordance with the Constitutional authority and responsibility of the Congress to:

1. Establish justice;
2. Guarantee the equal protection of the laws;
3. Ensure and protect due process of law;
4. Interpret the meaning of "Cruel and Unusual Punishments" forbidden under the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, under the authority granted to Congress in Section 5 of the 14th Amendment;
5. Provide for the common defense, through the maintenance of legitimacy and respect for the United States among the community of nations.

MAJOR REASONS DISCUSSED IN THE ASSEMBLY FOR RECOMMENDING ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY INCLUDE:

Differences in numbers of executions, and the types of crimes being punished, between rich and poor, between the races, and across local and state governments;

Evidence that innocent people are executed;

Legal representation for death eligible defendants is often poor;

The death penalty and all the appeals are more costly than alternatives such as life imprisonment;

The death penalty doesn't have the deterrent effect on murder that people think it does;

The death penalty hurts our reputation and respect for the United States in a world where most other nations have abolished it;

The unnecessary mental distress caused to those who must carry out executions.

_____ I SUPPORT the CACTUS recommendation to abolish the death penalty.

_____ I OPPOSE the CACTUS recommendation and prefer to keep the death penalty.

