



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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DEATH PENALTY NOT NEEDED TO KEEP US SAFE

The public policy arm of Wisconsin's Catholic bishops reaffirmed its stance that the death penalty is not necessary to keep Wisconsin safe and the legislature should rebuff efforts to restore it.

"Our ancestors and the legislature did the right thing 150 years ago when they abolished the death penalty," said John Huebscher, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference. "In the years since, our state has shown that public safety is possible without state-sponsored executions."

His comments were in response to introduction of Senate Bill 115. The bill restores the death penalty for murders that are "vicious."

Huebscher added that citizens and policy makers should keep the results of the November 2006 referendum on the death penalty in perspective.

"The more people talked about the death penalty, the less they liked it and support for the referendum decreased steadily throughout the year," he noted. "At the same time, there is growing support for punishing murderers with life imprisonment without parole. That is the law in Wisconsin and it serves us well."

Huebscher urged the legislature to turn its attention to other matters that will do more good for the public at large.

"The dignity of human life is better served when government directs its resources to helping the living than when it sanctions life-taking vengeance," he said. "Bills to restore the death penalty should be set aside in favor of efforts to offer greater access to health care, improve schools, and foster economic growth."

"The death penalty offers retribution. The legislature should pursue policies that offer hope," he concluded.

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