



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE  
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## ACTION ALERT

**DATE:** March 19, 2009  
**TO:** Concerned Parties  
**FROM:** Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

### NAACP Calls on New Mexico Governor to Sign the Death Penalty Abolition Bill Today

#### **THE ISSUE:**

On Friday, March 13, 2009, the New Mexico state legislature passed a bill repealing the death penalty in that state. Governor Bill Richardson has until midnight tonight (Wednesday, March 18) to sign the bill into law. If Governor Richardson does not sign the legislation it will die and the state will continue to execute people.

Governor Richardson has indicated that he wants to hear from the residents of New Mexico and from people from throughout the United States with their thoughts on the proposed death penalty repeal. Governor Richardson can be reached by phone at (505) 827-3000. Those wishing to send him an e-mail should go to his website at [www.governor.state.nm.us](http://www.governor.state.nm.us) and click on "Contact the Governor".

**THE NAACP STRONGLY URGES EVERYONE IN NEW MEXICO AND THROUGHOUT THE U.S. TO CONTACT GOVERNOR RICHARDSON AND URGE HIM TO REPEAL THE DEATH PENALTY!**

From the days of slavery, through years of lynchings and Jim Crow laws, and even today capital punishment has always been deeply affected by race. Although African Americans make up only 13% of the overall population, 42% of the people currently on death row are black. African Americans are also over-represented in the number of people on death row who are later found to be innocent: 38% of death row inmates freed since 1973 because of new evidence were African Americans, and 35% of those executed and later found to be innocent were black.

Furthermore, the race of the victim in a death penalty case appears to have an impact: 79% of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were white, even though nationally only 50% of murder victims overall were white. This problematic trend sends the troubling message that in our criminal justice system, white lives are more valuable than those of racial or ethnic minorities.

[More...](#)

## **THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:**

**CONTACT GOVERNOR RICHARDSON TODAY AND URGE HIM TO SIGN HB 285 TO REPEAL THE STATE'S DEATH PENALTY.** To contact the Governor, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

**Governor Richardson can be reached by phone at (505) 827-3000.**

(see message section, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

**Those wishing to send him an e-mail should go to his website at [www.governor.state.nm.us](http://www.governor.state.nm.us) and click on "Contact the Governor".**

### **THE MESSAGE**

- Sadly, throughout our country, race continues to play a determining role in who is convicted of, and executed, for a crime.
- States are unable to prevent or undo the accidental execution of innocent people.
- Executions are carried out at a staggering cost to taxpayers.
- Capital punishment does not deter crime.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!  
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

**MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.**

*To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit [www.naACP.org](http://www.naACP.org)*

March 18, 2009

Governor Bill Richardson  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail  
Room 400  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

*Via e-mail*

**RE: SUPPORT FOR HB 285 TO REPEAL NEW MEXICO'S DEATH PENALTY**

Dear Governor Richardson;

I strongly urge you to sign HB285 into law and to repeal New Mexico's death penalty. The death penalty is an expensive and ineffective punishment that should be abolished and I am proud of the people of New Mexico for leading the charge in our state.

Sadly, throughout our country, race continues to play a determining role in who is convicted of, and executed, for a crime. From the days of slavery, through years of lynchings and Jim Crow laws, and even today capital punishment has always been deeply affected by race. Although African Americans make up only 13% of the overall population, 42% of the people currently on death row are black. African Americans are also over-represented in the number of people on death row who are later found to be innocent: 38% of death row inmates freed since 1973 because of new evidence were African Americans, and 35% of those executed and later found to be innocent were black.

Furthermore, the race of the victim in a death penalty case appears to have an impact: 79% of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were white, even though nationally only 50% of murder victims overall were white. This problematic trend sends the troubling message that in our criminal justice system, white lives are more valuable than those of racial or ethnic minorities.

Another concern I have is that states are unable to prevent or undo the accidental execution of innocent people. Since the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1977, at least 124 men and women have been released from death row nationally – some only minutes away from execution.

Furthermore, executions are carried out at a staggering cost to taxpayers. It is far more costly to execute a person than to keep him or her in prison for life. Lastly, capital punishment does not deter crime. Scientific studies have consistently shown that executions do not deter people from committing heinous crimes any more than do long prison sentences.

Once again, I strongly urge you to sign HB 285 into law. I thank you in advance for your interest in my opinion.