

## Opposition to the death penalty continues to grow

Maureen Fiedler | Feb. 17, 2014 NCR Today

I heard the good news on NPR: Washington state's governor, Jay Inslee, announced he will not sign death warrants even though the death penalty is legal in his state. He said there have been "too many doubts raised about capital punishment, [and] there are too many flaws in this system today." That may be the understatement of the year.

Inslee joins Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber and Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper in declaring what are in effect state moratoriums on the use of the death penalty.

Add to the good news a dramatic change in polling on this issue over the last 18 years. [A 2013 Pew Research Center survey found](#) [1] that while a majority of Americans (55 percent) still support the death penalty for convicted murderers, that percentage is considerably lower than the 78 percent who supported such a policy in 1996. Equally significant is the fact that only 18 percent of Americans "strongly" favored the death penalty in 2013, compared with 28 percent only two years before.

I have always been proud that my state, Maryland, banned the death penalty with the strong support of our governor, Martin O'Malley. There are now 18 states (plus the District of Columbia) that have outlawed the practice and a number with *de facto* moratoriums because execution methods are being debated in the courts.

Those methods of execution are raising new questions. In January, Dennis McGuire was executed in Ohio by lethal injection using a new "cocktail" of drugs. He was in a painful dying process for 15 minutes.

Interestingly, Ohio created this new cocktail because Europeans, who supplied the old cocktail of drugs, refuse to sell such drugs to any U.S. jurisdiction for such purposes.

On this issue, the European Union (which forbids the death penalty, period) is way ahead of the United States. But we're making progress.

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[1] <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/11/end-of-life-survey-report-app-b.pdf>