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Nearly 100 Criminal Justice Leaders Urge President Biden to Take Immediate Action to End the Federal Death Penalty

Current and Former Prosecutors, Law Enforcement Leaders, and Former DOJ Officials and Judges Call for Definitive Steps to Dismantle Executions

Today, a bipartisan group of nearly 100 criminal justice leaders — including over 50 current elected local prosecutors (District Attorneys, State’s Attorneys, Prosecuting Attorneys, County Attorneys and Commonwealth’s Attorneys), seven current Attorneys General, nine current and former Police Chiefs and Sheriffs, and 20 former U.S. Attorneys, DOJ officials and judges — [sent a letter](#) to President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris urging them to take all actions within their power to immediately and definitively end the death penalty in the United States. The letter urges the new administration to take multifaceted and lasting steps that future administrations cannot readily undo, to include: commuting the sentences of all those on federal death row and withdrawing current death penalty warrants, dismantling the death chamber at Terre Haute, encouraging DOJ leadership to instruct all federal prosecutors to not seek the death penalty in future cases, supporting and incentivizing state efforts to end capital punishment, and supporting legislation to end the federal death penalty.

“The death penalty is an archaic and failed institution that is rooted in racism and too often punishes the innocent. The previous administration’s cruel and ruthless killing spree undermined the already-fragile trust in the justice system and revealed that a simple pause on executions is not nearly enough,” said **Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director of Fair and Just Prosecution**, the organizer of the letter and a former federal prosecutor who also signed on to the letter. “President Biden is the first president to openly oppose capital punishment, and we now have an opportunity to permanently end the federal death penalty, once and for all.”

After the Trump administration rushed to execute 13 people in its last six months in office, putting countless additional lives in danger as a COVID-19 outbreak took over federal death row, the signatories make clear that a moratorium is insufficient to end our nation’s use of the death penalty: “[A]t a time when racial injustice, trust in law enforcement, and our nation’s reputation in the eyes of the world are all in dire need of repair, anything short of these steps would fail to move our nation forward or attend to these pressing crises. We should not leave the lives of all people still on federal death row — and many more who will become entangled with the federal system — in the hands of future administrations.”

“During my tenure as U.S. Attorney, my community entrusted me to pursue justice and promote public safety,” said **William B. Cummings, former United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia** and a signatory on the letter. “Abolishing the death penalty is a critical step in

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building trust between law enforcement and the people we serve, and that trust is integral to keeping our communities safe.”

The United States was one of only [20 countries](#), and the only developed [Western democracy](#), to use the death penalty in 2019 and is far [more likely](#) to impose the punishment in cases involving Black defendants or white victims. Since 1973, at least [174](#) people on death row have been exonerated, while the National Academy of Sciences [estimates](#) that over 4 percent of death row prisoners are innocent.

“It has never been clearer that executing fellow Americans is inhumane, immoral and ineffective at deterring crime,” said **Joseph R. Grodin, former California Supreme Court Associate Justice** and another signatory on the letter. “Federal leadership is needed now more than ever to finally rid our nation of this failed and destructive process and restore our credibility in the eyes of the world.”

Read the letter and see the full list of signatories below and [here](#).

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Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

List of Signatories

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Wesley Bell

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Buta Biberaj

Commonwealth’s Attorney, Loudoun County, Virginia

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Former Judge, Colorado Court of Appeals

Jean Dubofsky

Former Justice, Colorado Supreme Court

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Former Judge, Superior Court of Orange County, California

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Former Associate Justice, California Supreme Court

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Former District Attorney, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

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Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, Criminal Appellate Chief, and General Crimes Chief, Central District of California

Former Chair, Solicitor General's Criminal Appellate Advisory Group, U.S. Department of Justice

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Former Chief, San Diego Police Department, California

Former Chief, San Jose Police Department, California

Former Chief, Richmond Police Department, California

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Former Magistrate Judge, U.S. District Court, Central District of California

Former Judge, U.S. District Court, Central District of California

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Former U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona

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