

Sample Letter: Calling for Moratorium due to Concerns of Racial Bias

Your Return Address

Address of recipient

Date

Dear _____,

As your constituent from _____ [neighborhood], I am writing to voice my concerns about the death penalty in Ohio and the need for moratorium. I ask for your support for legislation that would enact a temporary “time-out” on execution in Ohio until an independent study of the inequality in our state’s death penalty system is completed and publicly discussed. I am particularly concerned about racial bias and Ohio’s death penalty.

Identify yourself and your issue!

[Though a study bill has been introduced, we are not currently asking for action on it, rather this is a nice space to add more about a moratorium, defined as a “time out” while an *independent* Commission composed of experts study issues including geographic disparity, racial disparity, economic disparity, innocence, ineffective counsel, jury selection, mental illness and other issues in Ohio’s current “broken” death penalty system.]

Know your legislation.

In 2005 Ohio executed 4 men. Since reinstatement Ohio has executed 20 men. Ohio needs a temporary halt as we continue to find troubling issues on Ohio’s death row. To date over 120 groups throughout the State of Ohio have called for a moratorium on executions. The death penalty does not serve as a deterrent to crime in Ohio as other states without the death penalty have safer streets. We must reconsider this issue

Know your issue.

I am particularly concerned about the issue of race and jury selection. In 1999 the US Supreme Court and the Ohio Bar Association commissioned a report to propose recommendations to insure jury diversity. According to Smith’s clemency brief “There has been a gross under representation of minorities and women as grand jury forepeople in Hamilton County in the last twenty years....Of the eighty seven Hamilton County grand juries that returned capital indictments from 1982-1998, there were only four African-Americans and only nineteen women who served as grand jury forepersons.”

Share your experience / story / individual concern.

I look forward to hearing back from you on this most important issue.

Ask for response.

Sincerely,

Your name