

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES, INC.

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**ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

RESOLUTION 09-01

**TITLE: OPPOSING THE REINSTATEMENT OF DEATH PENALTY IN
ALASKA**

WHEREAS: The Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. is concerned with and advocates for equitable treatment of Alaska Natives within the judicial system of the State of Alaska, and;

WHEREAS: In Alaska, eighteen (18) percent of Alaska's total population of 655,435¹ people is composed of American Indians and Alaska Natives, the highest proportion of the total population of any state in the United States of America,² and;

WHEREAS: The Alaska Native population is disproportionately represented in the correctional system in that Alaska Natives represent between 30% and 40% of the state's inmate population at any given point in time,³ and;

WHEREAS: There is significant evidence of racial bias toward economically disadvantaged members of ethnic minorities in the administration of the death penalty in other jurisdictions, and;

WHEREAS: There is substantial concern among the Alaska Native Community, and there is no evidence to the contrary, that in all likelihood the Alaska system of criminal jurisprudence is not capable of avoiding racial bias in the trial process, and;

WHEREAS: The majority of Alaska Natives and people residing in rural areas of the State of Alaska do not have the means to acquire adequate legal defense counsel when charged with serious crimes, and;

WHEREAS: Establishing a death penalty law and implementing it will cost millions of dollars that the State of Alaska can ill afford during these times of economic situations in the nation and in the State of Alaska, and;

¹ <http://www.ask.com/web?q=Alaska&qsrc=8&o=2825&l=dir>

² <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/011910.html>

³ <http://tj.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/83/1/90>

WHEREAS: The Native American tribes and organizations have historically opposed the death penalty as demonstrated by past actions to defeat the federal death penalty legislation, and;

WHEREAS: We believe that capital punishment degrades and brutalizes any society that practices it by teaching the use of violence in reaction to violence, and;

WHEREAS: We believe that capital punishment does not deter crime, but serves only to exact revenge, and;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) that they are opposed to the reinstatement of the death penalty in the State of Alaska, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the AFN Board urges the members of the Alaska State Legislature, both rural and urban, to oppose any effort of reinstatement of the death penalty in Alaska, including but not limited to House Bill 9 (HB 9).

ADOPTED THIS DAY 11th OF FEBRUARY
2009



Julie E. Kitka
President

15 February 2009

With the introduction of death penalty legislation in the State Legislature, Alaska stands at a historic turning point. The State has not carried a death penalty since Territorial days. We of the Anchorage Friends Meeting (Quakers) urge all Alaskans to think carefully about the repercussions that would be brought by a death penalty in our state, and what our collective decision says about us as a society. The criminal sanctions we embrace not only reflect our deepest values and beliefs, but also shape the community we become.

For more than 300 years, Quakers have sought to answer that of God in every person, and have therefore sought to address injustices and inequalities in our own lives and in the societies to which we belong. That our country's justice system is subject to human error, leading to the conviction of innocent people, is a matter of public record. That it is subject to human blindness, leading to disturbing racial disparity in the application of capital punishment, has been amply demonstrated. In recent decades, the death penalty has been suspended or abolished in many states, in recognition of errors in conviction and racial disparity in application.

These and many other compelling arguments speak volumes against capital punishment on purely rational grounds, and we urge all citizens to consider the excellent information put together by Amnesty International, Alaskans Against the Death Penalty, and American Friends Service Committee, among others. For us, it is a matter that goes even further. Even if our court system was flawless, and there were no conceivable questions of error, innocence, or equality, we would still uphold the sanctity of each human life: that of God in every person and the possibility of redemption and reconciliation. We cannot escape the conclusion that the death penalty, as an instrument of any government, and perhaps especially a democratic government, brutalizes and degrades that society which it strives to protect.

Anchorage Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

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Resolution Adopted by the CCAR

Capital Punishment

**Adopted by the CCAR at the 90th Annual Convention of
the Central Conference of American Rabbis
Phoenix, Arizona, March 26-29, 1979**

In 1958 and again in 1960, the Central Conference of American Rabbis stated its opposition to all forms of capital punishment.

We reaffirm that position now. Nothing which we have observed during the intervening years has shaken our convictions that:

- a. Both in concept and in practice, Jewish tradition found capital punishment repugnant, despite Biblical sanctions for it. For the past 2,000 years, with the rarest of exceptions, Jewish courts have refused to punish criminals by depriving them of their lives.
- b. No evidence has been marshaled to indicate with any persuasiveness that capital punishment serves as a deterrent to crime.
- c. We oppose capital punishment under all circumstances.



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From: Rabbi Michael Oblath 2/19/09