

# Face Off: Capital punishment or life in prison?

**Jeremy Freid**  
The Clackamas Print



Capital punishment is a necessary sentence in today's world. When people discuss life in prison as opposed to capital punishment, there are a number of factors left out that are pertinent to this topic, such as when it should be used, why it is necessary and why people think a life sentence should be used instead.

First, capital punishment should only be given when a case has overwhelming proof that the person committed the crime. If there is DNA evidence that could be used, use it. If there is no DNA evidence, but with an iron clad chain of evidence, then capital punishment could still be issued. And last but not least, when old death penalty cases come up on one of their many appeals, if DNA evidence is still viable it should be considered.

DNA evidence has recently become a very useful tool in identifying who was at the scene of a crime and also pointing out who was holding the gun, smoking the cigarette, using lip balm and even identifying whose hair fell onto the victim's body. A good DNA trace can make a case against someone when there is virtually no other evidence.

When people commit crimes so heinous as to be considered a crime against our society, such as crimes wherein the gender, race or religious status of the victim is the primary cause of the crime, capital punishment must be used. When such a thing occurs, they have lost the right to live and given up their right to decide their own fate.

So why should we as taxpayers continue to pay for their confinement while their continued existence acts as a pock mark on our society? To me that makes no sense. I can understand in certain situations that a life sentence without the possibility of parole

or even with parole in 30 years is a necessary sentence, but in other cases the only just and right decision is a sentence of death.

The death penalty is closure for the victim's family. When a family member is gone yet the person who committed the act remains in prison, even for life, he is still there, alive, a festering wound to the family, not closure. Really, what can decide whether a family will come to a good closure is whether or not a criminal gets the death penalty.

Some of the opponents of capital punishment believe we should abandon the death penalty because they feel it would lower our society, or that it is immoral. We use a system which sentences the accused with an impartial jury and with evidence that is presented to the jury who decide the verdict.

The system we have in place is set up to mete out justice. To deny our judicial system the ability to do so would be to lower ourselves and to weaken our society.

In the end, we know the system is not perfect, and we can all think of improvements. Requiring strict guidelines for its use is certainly beneficial, but taking away our ability to use it altogether is imprudent, and will lead to problems. This is why I think that capital punishment has a place in the system.



**Elizabeth Tobey**  
The Clackamas Print

"Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong?"

It's one of those clever phrases you find on bumper stickers. But it's a question worth asking when it comes to the death penalty.

The death penalty is not an effective way to prevent murders. A recent California study showed that homicide rates went up by nine percent during times when the state legalized capital punishment, versus

periods of time when it was illegal. "It is the deed that teaches, not the name we give it," George Bernard Shaw said. "Murder and capital punishment are not opposites that cancel one another, but similar that breed their kind."

By allowing executions to remain a legal form of punishment we are perpetuating the cycle of violence, not putting a stop to it.

"The death penalty is no more effective a deterrent than life imprisonment," said U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

It is also much more expensive. Calculations from criminal justice systems in North Carolina, California, Texas, and Florida all show that it costs between \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million more to execute prisoners than it does to keep them locked up for life.

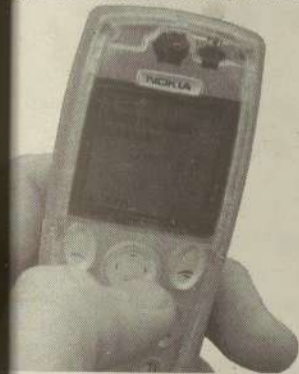
Yet the U.S. remains one of the few places where capital punishment is legal. We have some of the highest execution rates of all countries still allowing it.



## Text messaging taxes wallet, inhibits learning

**Kyle Slate**  
The Clackamas Print

Company InphoMatch reports that they delivered over 650 million messages in the first quarter of 2003 and roughly two billion the first quarter of



2004. Most messages were between students.

Short message service (SMS), more commonly known as text messaging, is the process of communication, where one cell phone user types a message to another user.

Each message sent costs a little over 10 cents. In addition to the high cost, a text message has a limit to how many characters, including punctuation and spaces that can be included in each text. This is in comparison to a cell phone call which costs about 11 cents, unlike a text with its limit of 80 characters.

Other problems with texting include the distraction it causes in classroom and work environments. 56 percent of children 14 to 16 years old were reported to own cell phones in 2004. Early Show correspondent

Trish Regan agrees; in recent report she said, "Teens often turn cell phones into tools for socializing during a time when they should be learning."

Not only does text messaging damage your wallet and mind, some doctors believe that it can physically cause you harm. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, which causes severe pain in the joints of the hand and wrist, is caused by repetitive flexing and extending of the tendons in the hands and wrists, particularly when done forcefully and for prolonged periods; this happens when you do such things as text an entire conversation to a friend.

Every time someone gets a text message from a friend asking "what's up" during the middle of class, their education, and social and physical health should all be considered. Not to mention their wallet.

## Tell us what you think!

Do you feel we have misrepresented a subject? Want to express your view on an issue? Write a letter to the editor: [oped@clackamas.edu](mailto:oped@clackamas.edu), letters will be printed after being edited for grammar and clarity

**Student Poll:**  
*Do politics matter to you? Why or why not?*



"No, 'cuz they are too complicated."

**Jillian Hill**



"I didn't used to care about them but I do now. I'm wanting to be more informed so that I can make a better decision."

**Kevin Beasley**



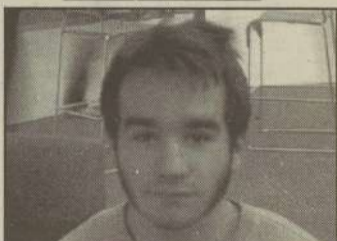
"Yes, so I know who to vote for."

**Kimmy Carrier**



"Yes, because they give order to the chaos of America."

**Mitchell Pennell**



"To a certain extent, some political matters matter to me."

**Kevin Ellingson**

*This week's poll compiled by Stephen Bostwick and Norma Martinez.*

the CLACKAMAS Print

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