

New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops



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STATEMENT

Governor Susana Martinez's Placement of the Reinstatement of the Death Penalty on New Mexico's Upcoming Special Legislative Session's Agenda is Irresponsible

We, the Catholic Bishops of New Mexico, find the decision by Governor Susana Martinez to place the reinstatement of the Death Penalty on the agenda of a special legislative session to be irresponsible. The legislature spent a decade debating the issue, ending with a bipartisan vote that ended the practice of a state-sanctioned death penalty. This was a definitive decision and had ample discovery of evidence and debate. That decision should remain final.

The abomination of taking a life, the death penalty, needs to be addressed in a general session where full debate, in front of numerous committees, can examine all the facts and legislators can hear all public comment. New Mexico faces the crisis of children being abused. Our utmost priority must be to work together to protect and prevent harm to our children, not reinstating state-sanctioned violence. Violence does not end violence. We pray that our society will be moving away from a culture of death to a culture of life, making our world a more loving and just society.

The death penalty does not prevent the death of children. The current financial crisis of the state damages the ability for state programs to deliver critical prevention services. These are the issues at hand for a special session.

It is evident that the Governor has chosen to use the deaths of police officers and children to drive a politically-motivated action to place the death penalty on a very short special session purely for the purpose of politics and campaign jockeying. We call on the Governor to recant her call for placing this on the agenda of the special session. We also call on the legislators to reject this proposed agenda item in the special session.

Pope Francis has called for a world-wide end to the death penalty. We oppose the reinstatement of the death penalty in New Mexico. If there were to be a debate on this, the integrity of the process should be protected by all. This irresponsible move by the Governor is ignoring the immensity of the issue. The national trend is to end the practice of using the death penalty. The evidence of innocent persons unjustly convicted and on death row that has been brought to light by DNA, for example, illustrates the unethical and problematic use of the death penalty. The Governor is attempting to create a distraction from the numerous crises taking place in New Mexico. The financial and social crises of the state need the full attention of our legislators.--END

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