

# Terry Lenamon on the Death Penalty

Sidebar with a Board Certified Expert Criminal Trial Attorney



**Terence M. Lenamon** is a Florida Bar certified expert in the area of criminal trial law. With over 17 years experience he has built a reputation as one of Florida's most respected criminal defense lawyers. His defense has been sought by many high-profile clients and has led him through 20 first-degree murder trials and eight death penalty cases. That experience has brought him national recognition as a go-to commentator on death penalty issues. He is the force behind both [deathpenaltyblog.com](http://deathpenaltyblog.com) and Florida Capital Resource Center ([floridacapitalresourcecenter.org](http://floridacapitalresourcecenter.org)), and can be reached at [terry@lenamonlaw.com](mailto:terry@lenamonlaw.com).

## Guest Post: Cut This: The Death Penalty by James Clark

Posted on July 1, 2010 by [Terry Lenamon](#)

*[The following post is being republished here with the permission of its author, [James Clark](#), field organizer for the ACLU, Southern California. It was previously published on the [Huffington Post](#) on June 28, 2010.]*

California's governor has proposed closing the state's \$20 billion budget gap with a drastic cuts-only approach; slashing funding for vital human services without working to increase revenue. Yet one state program seems to be immune from these cuts: the death penalty.

We think the time has come to [CUT THIS](#). (see video below)

California spends vast amounts of money prosecuting death penalty cases and supporting death row. To avoid executing an innocent person, the death penalty process is long, complicated, and expensive. Each prosecution seeking death costs approximately \$1.1 million more than a trial seeking permanent imprisonment, and with more than 700 inmates, California's death row is by far the largest and most costly in the nation. In total, California's death penalty system costs taxpayers \$137 million per year.

Contrast that with just \$11 million per year if we replace the death penalty with permanent imprisonment. Top that off with \$400 million saved if we don't build a new death row, needed because the existing one is so old and overcrowded.

Today, if Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger were to convert the sentences of all those on death row to permanent imprisonment, the state would save \$1 billion over the next five years without releasing a single prisoner.

But the death penalty is not on the chopping block. Rather than cutting the death penalty, the governor has focused on cutting the "rehabilitation" side of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilita-

tion. Programs emphasizing education, rehabilitation, and addiction treatment have all seen cuts to their budgets, while death penalty prosecutions continue statewide.

Meanwhile, efforts to get California's budget under control are threatening the safety of the state's most vulnerable residents: seniors and people with disabilities who rely on in-home supportive care, working moms and their children surviving round after round of cuts to child care and CalWORKs, and children who depend on the Healthy Families program for insurance coverage. They all have faced dangerous erosions in access to health care and social services. Yet funding for death penalty prosecutions continues unabated.

Even victims of violent crime have felt the sting of the state budget cuts. Last year, the legislature and the governor took \$50 million from the Victims' Compensation Fund, cutting money used to pay for funeral services, counseling, and medical care for crime victims and their families. Now the fund is running out of money because the state has prioritized execution above victims' services.

In addition, local law enforcement is also under threat. Los Angeles is currently unable to afford overtime pay for homicide investigations, and Oakland is about to lay off 80 police officers. Already, more than half of the murders from the last 10 years remain unsolved in Los Angeles County and Alameda County, where Oakland is located. Statewide, 45 percent of murders were not solved from 1999 to 2008. That means up to 10,000 killers walk the streets because we are not spending the time and money needed to catch them.

California must re-evaluate its budget priorities. Cuts to social services and effective public safety programs that protect communities and reduce crime threaten California families. Permanent imprisonment is a safe and cost-effective alternative to the death penalty, providing swift and certain justice, real public safety, and massive budget savings that can be passed on to taxpayers. Every day, more and more Californians are calling on Gov. Schwarzenegger to CUT THIS. End the death penalty and save \$1 billion in five years.

Learn more about how we can achieve [Budget Justice](#) in California.