

February 13, 2017, Hearing on HB 2167
House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
Testimony in Support of HB 2167

Greetings! Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm the Reverend Jason T. Rowinski, an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene. My pastoral ministry spans 24 years of my life and I've ministered in Kansas, Ohio, and Oklahoma. I reside in Shawnee, Kansas, and was most recently Senior Pastor of Shawnee Church of the Nazarene. Currently, I am an adjunct professor and the New Works coordinator for the Kansas City District office of the Church of the Nazarene.

I write to you today as a representative of the many evangelical Christians who oppose the death penalty. There's much that could be said about this issue and I'm sure that you've heard much of it already. However, I'd like to briefly summarize my opposition to the death penalty with two words: **Conservatism and Consistency**.

The word **conservatism** derives from the Latin word "conservare" (meaning to "protect" or "preserve"). David Floyd, a Republican state representative in Kentucky, recently introduced a bill to repeal the state's death penalty, arguing that the law was incompatible with conservative values (<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/5707>):

- Conservatives value innocent life and should not support a state government program that can kill innocent people, which happens all too frequently
- Conservatives are mindful of the potential to abuse power and should not trust the government with the power to execute a person who is safely behind bars.
- Conservatives are the first to call out government programs that fail to meet intended goals and cost exorbitant amounts of money.
- Conservatives want a government that will balance budgets, cut waste and eliminate programs that do not make fiscal sense. The death penalty costs taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

My opposition to the death penalty is also a matter of **consistency**. The most precious gift our Creator gave us was the gift of life. All human beings are made in the image of God. Christians believe that life begins at conception and is inherently valuable until we die. Indeed, we believe that life continues after death. The most logically consistent position is one that values life from conception to the grave. The first sin recorded outside the Garden of Eden was Cain's murder of Abel, yet the Lord did not kill Cain. I understand the desire for justice for victims' families. However, many incorrectly use of the biblical word for justice, which is not "retribution" but "reconciliation." Jesus said: "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person." Justice means to set the world right or to see the spread of shalom (well-being) in the land. In know that this is difficult work, but if we are to be a society that values life itself we must remain steadfastly committed to it and not be swayed by the inconsistencies of retribution.

I hope that my voice contributes to your thoughts and governance in some way. Thank you again for your time and consideration. Thank you also for your service to our state.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Jason T. Rowinski
Shawnee, KS
Email: jtrowinski@gmail.com