

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
300 S.W. TENTH AVENUE
TOPEKA, KS 66612
(785) 296-2721
mark.schreiber@house.ks.gov



DISTRICT ADDRESS
1722 YUCCA LANE
EMPORIA, KS 66801
(620) 342-6954
markschreiber60@gmail.com

MARK SCHREIBER
60TH DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of HB 2282
Before the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
February 19, 2019
Presented by Rep. Mark Schreiber

I was only three years old in 1959, when a tragedy occurred in Holcomb, a little town 7 miles west of my hometown, Garden City. Herb Clutter, his wife, a daughter and a son were murdered by Perry Smith and Richard Hickock. Smith and Hickock were arrested and charged that same year and almost six years later were hung by order of the State of Kansas. Two months later, two AWOL soldiers, were also put to death for their murder of a Kansas railroad worker. The last 54 years have not seen one person executed in Kansas.

I have come slowly to oppose the death penalty. It never was an area of interest to me growing up. However, as I became a husband and parent, a young man I knew growing up committed a series of murders and was eventually put to death in another state. I believe that incident began my journey. The belief that all life has value became a kind of milestone for me. Whether those lives were like mine, or were those shunned by visible and invisible disabilities, or even those on death row. My conclusion was we should respect all life, even of those who commit atrocities.

I support HB 2282, which abolishes the death penalty for those crimes occurring after the enactment of this legislation. I cannot challenge those who want to retain the death penalty because of what has happened to their loved ones. The pain of murder is something I cannot contemplate. My only measure is that I be as consistent as possible with my own message.

Kansas has ten people on death row; the most tenured persons have been there since 2002...just over 16 years. The fulfillment of the death penalty takes decades due to appeals, which are automatic in our laws. The cost and continued investigations and interviews in these cases have no bounds...until all state and federal appeals are lost. Is this justice or just replaying a tragedy over and over?

Capital punishment is currently authorized by 30 states, the federal government and the U.S. military. In recent years, New Mexico (2009), Illinois (2011), Connecticut (2012) and Maryland (2013) joined 16 other states that have legislatively abolished the death penalty. I believe it is time for us to join them and abolish the death penalty in Kansas by passing HB 2282.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.