

Representative Kent Coleman
32 Legislative Plaza
Nashville, TN 37243-0149

Dear Representative Coleman,

I want to thank you again for your leadership of the Committee on the Administration of the Death Penalty. The work of this committee is crucial for ensuring fairness and accuracy in the death penalty system in Tennessee.

As a citizen of this state, I am very concerned that almost no one on Tennessee's death row could afford his/her own attorney and that the indigent often do not receive an adequate defense. I am also troubled by the racial and geographic disparities affecting who receives a death sentence as well as the number of those with mental illness who are currently on Tennessee's death row. And, cost studies in other states reveal that the death penalty system is costing taxpayers far more than a system with only life without parole. Tennesseans should know how much we are spending to maintain this broken system.

More troubling still is the fact that 127 people have been released from death rows nationwide when evidence of their innocence emerged, including Michael McCormick in Tennessee who served 15 years on death row before a jury found him not guilty in a new trial. Paul House still remains on Tennessee's death row though the U.S. Supreme Court stated in 2006 concerning his case that no jury in the country would convict him given the new evidence, including DNA, which indicates he did not commit the crime for which he has served nearly 23 years.

I hope that the committee will be extended for another year in order that the study is as thorough as possible. Again, I am so grateful for your leadership and your commitment to making Tennessee a more just state in which to live.

Sincerely,

Name
Address