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### California Proposition 62: Repealing the Death Penalty

Throughout history, a sentence to death has been a punishment for all sorts of crimes. Dating back to the times of ancient civilizations, the “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” solution has been set in place for extreme incidents. Contrary to popular belief, things have not changed that much since then. We have more advanced technology, and our societies are better developed, but the capital punishment for murder has remained. In the 2016 California general elections, proposition sixty-two has been included in hopes of repealing this outdated method of consequences, known today as the Death Penalty.

Since 1978, there have been 13 executions in California. However, 930 have been sentenced to death. Since the time the Death Penalty was reinstated in 1976, California has run the largest Death Row in the Western Hemisphere. The total costs, including higher security, room and board, attorney fees, etc, have cost taxpayers about \$5 billion. Compared to a life sentence, financially supporting someone on Death Row is eighteen times more costly. Moreover, 144 people originally given a death sentence have been found innocent after more investigation. A life sentence without the chance of parole as the maximum punishment would eliminate the chance of killing an innocent person. Proposition 62 in the California general elections is a measure to repeal the death penalty because financially and ethically, it is believed to be the wrong solution to cases of murder.

A vote yes on proposition 62 would mean that a person charged with murder would not be put on Death Row, but sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. If this measure were passed in California, it would not only apply to future convictions, but inmates who have previously been sentenced to the capital punishment. During their time in prison, these inmates would work to pay restitution to the victims' families, which would also be increased by 60%. In regards to the moral factors about the Death Penalty, a yes on prop 62 would eliminate something the majority find ethically challenging.

If someone were in favor of the death penalty, chances are they would vote no on prop 62 and yes on prop 66. Prop 66 is in favor of keeping the death penalty, but providing firmer guidelines to the process. Their slogan is "mend it, don't end it". Voting yes means the appeal process would be sped up by putting the Supreme Court in charge of each case and requiring a strict timeline. Similar to prop 62, prop 66 declares that the inmates would work and pay restitutions to the families of their victims. The opposition of proposition 62 are supporters of proposition 66 because it still provides the victims' families with a say in the fate of the person in question.

*The Press Democrat* believes in proposition 62. In an editorial, they declared "California's capital punishment system delivers neither swift justice nor certain closure for victims' families". From a financial and emotional perspective, *The Press Democrat* says the death penalty is not the answer. Repealing it would save tax dollars, while mending it would increase state costs significantly.

There are many ways to look at the value of capital punishment. From a financial standpoint, repealing the Death Penalty would save the state of California about \$150 million within the first few years. Although this amount could vary based on factors that are not

accounted for in the calculation, the state's budget is predicted to benefit. If the death penalty were to remain, and California attempted to fix the system, tens of millions of taxpayer dollars would be spent.

The majority of people can agree that the current system is inoperative or irrational. What people cannot concur on is what the proper solution to this problem is. However, by finding flaws in the proposals of a proposition may incline someone to vote a certain way. Proposition 66 does not specify how they would expedite trials or find the funds to do so. Each case in California takes a lengthy amount of time because there are very few lawyers who specialize in death penalty appeals (*The Press Democrat*). California has the most inmates on Death Row in the United States because of the regulation and extent the Supreme Court and trials go to review a case. Speeding up the process could mean making a mistake, and killing someone who could be found innocent later. With someone's life at stake, there is no margin for error. Victims' families deserve justice and closure, but I do not believe the death penalty will provide that for them. Proposition 66 would likely be unsuccessful in their efforts to "mend" the current system, and we would be left with the current (faulty) system to rely on.

In 2012, the measure to repeal the Death Penalty appeared on the ballot. With a slim margin, it lost. 47.3% of voters were in favor of the repeal, which gives it a high chance to be passed this November. Former president, Jimmy Carter, and Bernie Sanders, to name a few, have expressed their support for proposition 62. The division of votes between repealing the death penalty and mending it is going to be narrow, as it was in 2012. This is a topic that is going to constantly be questioned and appear on ballots in the future because of the controversy that follows it. Before 1978, there was a short period of time where a sentence to death row was not an option. However, it was reinstated after California realized there were flaws in their new plan.

Even if the maximum punishment for a murderer became a life sentence without the possibility of parole, it could be revisited in a future election like it had in the seventies. The reason this continues to appear on ballots is because there is no right way to deal with murder and murderers. California is closely divided between supporters and opposers of the Death Penalty, so it will continue to be questioned until something completely new is brought to the table.

Because of the narrow margin in the 2012 election, it is hard to say how California will vote this year. However, I believe people will vote no on proposition 62, and yes on proposition 66 because of the principle. Regarding the Death Penalty, people are predisposed to believe murderers do not deserve a beating heart, and there are not many arguments that will change their minds. However, if they were to consider the financial aspect of repealing the death penalty, it may persuade them. Billions of tax dollars are spent on security, room and board, and trials for people on Death Row. Without a sentence to death, that money could be rerouted to more important funds, like roadwork or the educational system. I am in favor of proposition 62 because it promotes change, and that is something California won't argue with.