

# Kearney Hub

## Death penalty ineffective and costly

Many Nebraskans are reconsidering their support for the death penalty, and with good reason. It's expensive, it's hardly a deterrent, and it's a false promise to the families and loved ones of murder victims that those who perpetrate heinous killings will face justice.

Today a total of 11 convicted murderers reside on Nebraska's death row, but it's not the seemingly endless series of court appeals, to which they're legally entitled, that's keeping them alive. Rather, it's Nebraska's inability to acquire the drug needed for lethal injections, sodium thiopental.

Overseas suppliers have refused to sell the drug for use in executions. Both times the state attempted to buy the drug suppliers recalled the shipments when they learned it would be used in Nebraska for lethal injections. One attempt by the state to acquire sodium thiopental was determined to be illegal.

Other states have attempted executions using an alternative cocktail of lethal drugs, but those executions have been badly botched.

Thankfully, Nebraska has not tried it. Doing so, without assurance of the effectiveness of the substitute medications, would be morally repugnant, not to mention indefensible from a legal perspective.

Some politicians maintain that it's worth the legal expenditure to retain capital punishment, but Nebraska taxpayers dish out millions of dollars for lawyers to counter appeals by death row inmates in a penal system that cannot carry out an execution, even if a judge were to set a date.

Because of that, Nebraska's death penalty is a sham. We're spending millions of dollars in court, but the inability to carry out a lethal injection undercuts the argument that the death penalty is a deterrent against murder. Also, victims' families and loved ones face unnecessary emotional stress and suffering each time appeals are filed.

It is no wonder that even some conservative Nebraskans now support the repeal of the death penalty and replacing it with life in prison with no possibility of parole.

Since statehood, Nebraska has executed 37 individuals, many by hanging and others in the electric chair. The state's last execution was by electrocution in 1997. There has never been a death by lethal injection, and the way events are trending, this state might never use that method. Knowing what we do about Nebraska's inability to carry out capital punishment, we should ask ourselves, are we paying too much for a false sense of safety and justice?