



# Diocese of Cheyenne

Office of the Bishop

## Statement from Bishop Steven Biegler on the Death Penalty

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Our Wyoming legislators have proposed a repeal of the death penalty with the introduction of HB0145. I support this bill for the following reasons.

Even the guilty have a right to life. Not even a murderer can lose his dignity as a person created in the image and likeness of God. As Pope Francis recently stated, "In the light of the Gospel the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person." This teaching centers on the awareness of the respect due to every human life.

The Catholic Church's opposition to the death penalty is not an indifference to the evil of crime, but an affirmation of the sacredness of all life even for those who have committed the most heinous of crimes. As Archbishop Joseph Naumann of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, whose own father was murdered, recently said: "Our refusal to resort to the death penalty is not because we fail to appreciate the horror of the crime committed, but because we refuse to imitate violent criminals." We refuse to treat any human person with such disregard for their human dignity.

There is a connection between opposition to abortion and repealing the death penalty. Since every human life is sacred, no one has the authority to terminate someone else's life either by abortion or by capital punishment. Only God has the authority to end human life, and the state promotes a disrespect for life when it engages in premeditated killing. This is especially the case when our society has efficacious detention systems that guarantee the due protection of citizens.

Many others in the pro-life movement have come to the same conclusion. They don't think that any person or institution has the right to play God, and they do not believe that the state encourages respect for life when it engages in premeditated killing. There is also the problem of the state's involving innocent people in a premeditated killing. "I'm personally opposed to killing and violence," said the prison warden in Utah who had to arrange Gary Gilmore's execution, "and having to do that is a difficult responsibility." In the case of the death penalty, at times, the state compels people to act against their consciences.

HB0145 is a step forward in promoting the dignity of every human person, and I encourage our legislators to support this bill.

**Bishop Steven Biegler**  
Diocese of Cheyenne