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## State should abolish capital punishment

New Jersey isn't using its death penalty, but it still costs taxpayers millions. So the state should simply get rid of it.

(179.2)(.0)(145.6)(78.3)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0)(.0) Since reinstating the death penalty 24 years ago, New Jersey has not executed a single prisoner. The state has just 10 men on its death row. Most of the death penalty verdicts returned by New Jersey juries over the years were later replaced with life sentences.

Additionally, the cash-strapped state has spent more than \$250 million over the years maintaining its death penalty and death row, according to the New Jersey Policy Perspective, a research organization.

All that being the case, it's time lawmakers, including Gov. Jon Corzine, moved to scrap the death penalty. While it may sometimes work as an effective bargaining tool for prosecutors, the state isn't using it and criminals and their attorneys know that.

Also, the death penalty is costing the taxpayers money. And many New Jerseyans find it to be a barbaric practice -- not to mention one in which there's no reversal if a convicted criminal is later found to be innocent.

Wednesday, a commission studying the death penalty met in Trenton to discuss the future of capital punishment in the Garden State. The special commission, formed last year, has until mid-November to give the Legislature recommendations on whether the state's death penalty law must be revised or abolished.

Twelve states and the District of Columbia do not have the death penalty. Several others mimic New Jersey in having the death penalty on the books, but rarely, if ever, using it.

Like many of those states, the death penalty doesn't seem to fit with what many New Jerseyans would consider fair and acceptable punishment. If that were not true, more New Jerseyans would have clamored for past governors to sign death warrants. But that simply hasn't happened, even with the most vile of criminals locked away in New Jersey's prisons.

Mohandas Gandhi once said, "An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind."

That poignant statement, in which Gandhi referred to violence and murder as a response to violence and murder, would seem to aptly describe how many New Jerseyans, and New Jersey governors, have felt about capital punishment.

Considering that, the cost associated with it and that the penalty hasn't been used in decades here, it's time New Jersey lawmakers got rid of it.

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