



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CALIFORNIA

801 12th Street, Suite 220, Sacramento, California 95814
(916) 442-7215 ■ Fax (916) 442-7362 ■ (888) 870-8683
www.lwvc.org ■ www.smartvoter.org ■ www.easyvoter.org
lwvc@lwvc.org

January 10, 2008

OFFICERS

President
Janis R. Hirohama
Manhattan Beach

Vice President
Trudy Jarratt
Arroyo Grande

Secretary
Wendy Phillips
Manhattan Beach

Treasurer
Susan Wilson
Redding

DIRECTORS

Advocacy
Linda Craig
Menlo Park

Communications
Jennifer A. Waggoner
San Francisco

Educational Activities
Lois Ledger
Long Beach

Government
Christopher S. Carson
Burbank

Member Services
Lois Chaney
Bakersfield

Natural Resources
Charolette Fox
Temecula

Social Policy
Julie Rajan
Palos Verdes Estates

Voter Service
Sharon Wallace
Chico

To: The Honorable John Van De Kamp, Chair, California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice, and Members of the Commission

From: Janis R. Hirohama, President

CC: Gerald F. Uelmen, Executive Director

Re: Administration of the Death Penalty in California

The League of Women Voters of California commends the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice for its current investigation of how the death penalty is administered in California. We look forward to seeing your recommendations.

The League of Women Voters supports the abolition of the death penalty. While we believe that the death penalty is inherently flawed and that no amount of reform can make it an appropriate sentencing option, we welcome actions that might mitigate some of its flaws as steps toward its abolition.

We expect that your investigation will confirm that the death penalty is applied unfairly in California. Research shows that use of the death penalty varies significantly within the state, depending on the race or ethnicity of the victim, the county of prosecution, and the diversity of the community.

The growing number of wrongful convictions that have been discovered lends further urgency to the need to consider alternatives to the death penalty. Concerns about wrongful convictions helped lead to a moratorium on executions in Illinois and to abolition of the death penalty in New Jersey.

Particularly in light of the data showing that use of the death penalty has no deterrent effect, we believe that scarce public safety funds would be better used for solving crimes and for violence prevention programs, rather than on exhaustive post-conviction appeals and carrying out executions.

There is an alternative to using the death penalty—imprisonment without the possibility of parole. We hope your recommendations to the legislature will promote use of this alternative.

Presented at the public hearing of the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice by Barbara Hopkins