



NEW ACADEMIC STUDY SHOWS OREGON DEATH PENALTY CASES COST AS MUCH AS A MILLION DOLLARS MORE THAN COMPARABLE NON-DEATH PENALTY CASES

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PORTLAND, Ore. – The high price of Oregon’s death penalty has been revealed for the first time by new research. Academics from Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland and Seattle University in Washington state have released a new study showing that aggravated murder cases with death sentences cost as much as a million dollars more than comparable cases with life sentences.

The death penalty was reinstated in Oregon in 1984 and is one of three sentencing options for the offense of aggravated murder. The others are life without parole and life with the possibility of parole. Oregon’s district attorneys have discretion to pursue death sentences on a case-by-case basis.

The Oregon Death Penalty Cost Analysis was funded by the Oregon Justice Resource Center, a Portland-based nonprofit.

“This report confirms what many had long suspected about the cost of Oregon’s death penalty, but the actual figures are staggering,” said Alice Lundell, Director of Communication for the Oregon Justice Resource Center. “We’re spending four times more on death penalty cases than on comparable cases without death sentences despite only having executed two people since Kennedy was President.”

The report’s authors, Professors Aliza Kaplan and Pete Collins and law student Venetia Mayhew, note that because district attorneys and the courts did not provide data on their spending on death penalty cases, the findings of the study are likely to be an underestimate of the cost of the death penalty.

There are currently 34 people on Oregon's death row. Governor Kate Brown announced last month that she was reaffirming the moratorium on executions that began in 2011. Despite the moratorium, death penalty cases continue to proceed through the appeals system and new death sentences can still be issued.

"Every Oregon taxpayer – including those in the 20 counties that haven't sent anyone to death row since it was reinstated in 1984 – is bearing the burden of funding this broken system," said Lundell. "That's money that's not being invested in our schools, in services for victims and their families, and in programs that would actually increase public safety. While the recent decision by Governor Brown to reaffirm the moratorium is a very welcome step, costs associated with Oregon's death penalty continue to mount."

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Please contact Alice Lundell, Director of Communication for Oregon Justice Resource Center, for more information and interviews.