



## Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

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## Texas Set to Carry Out 200<sup>th</sup> Execution during Perry Administration *State Remains Out of Step with Changing National Landscape*

**Austin, Texas** — On June 2, 2009 – barring an unlikely last-minute reprieve – the State of Texas will carry out its 200<sup>th</sup> execution under the administration of Governor Rick Perry. The execution of Terry Hankins will mark the 16<sup>th</sup> this year; 14 other executions have taken place nationwide. Five more executions are set to occur in Texas between July and September.

Nearly half of Texas' 438 executions since 1982 have taken place in the last eight years alone. "In this same time period, the death penalty landscape has changed dramatically both in Texas and nationwide," said Kristin Houlé, Executive Director of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP). "Since Governor Perry was sworn into office on December 21, 2000, three states have abandoned the death penalty entirely and numerous state legislatures have made significant progress in advancing repeal legislation, particularly during their 2009 sessions."

Since 2001, 40 people – including two in Texas – have been released from death row due to evidence of their wrongful conviction. In addition, the U.S. Supreme Court has prohibited the death penalty for persons with mental retardation and juvenile offenders, rendering more than three dozen Texas death sentences unconstitutional.

While Texas remains far out of step with the rest of the country, and the world, regarding executions, support for the death penalty in this state appears to be waning as public confidence in the fairness and accuracy of the ultimate form of punishment continues to diminish. New death sentences have declined more than 50% in Texas in the past six years as prosecutors and juries have come to accept the alternative punishment of life in prison without the possibility of parole (LWOP) as a reliable way to protect society, punish the guilty, and guard against convicting and executing innocent people.

"Rather than speaking of *seceding*, the leaders of this great state should be *following* the example of their peers in New Mexico, Maryland, New Jersey, and many others in examining the necessity and utility of capital punishment," said Houlé. "It is time to divert our state's valuable resources to programs that truly prevent crime and provide meaningful victims' services, rather than perpetuate the cycle of violence with state-sponsored killing."

For more facts and figures related to the 200<sup>th</sup> execution, go to  
<http://www.tcadp.org/uploads/Perry200FactSheet.pdf>.

TCADP members will hold vigils and other events on June 2 in multiple locations throughout the state. See <http://tcadp.org/index.php?page=vigils> for a complete list of vigil sites.

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