



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TCADP 2016 Conference to Address Changing Death Penalty Landscape
Annual gathering will host Nebraska Senator Colby Coash

(Austin, Texas) — Advocates and supporters from across Texas will gather on Saturday, February 20, 2016 at Unity of Houston for the 18th Annual Conference of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (TCADP). This event, *At the Epicenter of the Death Penalty*, will feature workshops, a keynote address, and a panel discussion about the shifting death penalty landscape in Texas and Harris County. Panelists include:

- Dr. Stephen Klineberg, Professor of Sociology at Rice University and the founder of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research. Dr. Klineberg will present the results of the 33rd Kinder Institute Houston Area Survey, which found that 69 percent of Houstonians support life in prison without the possibility of parole or another alternative over the death penalty for people convicted of first-degree murder.
- Rob Smith, a Senior Fellow at the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School and Visiting Scholar at the University of Texas at Austin School of Law. Mr. Smith's scholarship on the geography of the death penalty has appeared in numerous law journals and been cited by the United States Supreme Court.

Nebraska Senator Colby Coash will be the keynote speaker. Senator Coash represents District 27 and has served in the legislature since 2008. He played a critical role in the abolition of the death penalty in Nebraska in 2015, using his position as a conservative leader to convince his colleagues that the death penalty did not represent conservative values or the best interests of Nebraskans.

During the conference, TCADP will present an Appreciation Award to Texas State Representative Alma Allen, who represents District 131 in Houston, for her co-sponsorship of legislation that would repeal the death penalty in Texas. Patricia Delgado, who leads El Pasoans Against the Death Penalty, and KPFT 90.1 FM Houston Pacifica Radio also will receive Appreciation Awards in gratitude for their efforts to raise community awareness of death penalty issues.

The 2016 Media Award will be presented to *Houston Chronicle* Metro Columnist Lisa Falkenberg in recognition of her groundbreaking work on the Texas grand jury system and the case of Alfred Dewayne Brown. Her columns contributed to Brown's ultimate exoneration in June 2015 and propelled legislative reform last year.

TCADP will present the David P. Atwood Founder's Award to the Dominican Sisters of Houston in honor of their steadfast opposition to the death penalty and support.

"The theme of this year's conference reflects both past and present use of the death penalty in Harris County," said Kristin Houlé, the Executive Director of TCADP. "Harris County alone accounts for nearly

300 death sentences and more executions than any state in the country, besides Texas. At the same time, however, the county reflects the shifting death penalty landscape and the dramatic drop in death sentences over the last 15 years, both in Texas and nationally. Through the conference, we seek both to address Harris County's notorious outlier status and also lift up the significant changes occurring there and throughout the state when it comes to use of the death penalty."

The TCADP 2016 Annual Conference will take place from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM at Unity of Houston, 2929 Unity Drive, Houston, Texas 77057. The keynote address and awards ceremony will take place from 12:30 to 2:30 PM.

As a special prelude to the conference, TCADP and Anthony Believes will host "A Conversation from the Heart: An Evening with Anthony Graves" on Friday, February 19, 2016 from 6 to 8 PM at The Health Museum (1515 Hermann Dr.) in Houston's Museum District. The event will feature an exclusive screening of "Graves Injustice: A One Man Stage Narrative" and Q & A with Anthony Graves. Mr. Graves spent 18 years in prison, including 12 years on Texas' death row, and faced 2 execution dates as an innocent man. Earlier this month, the State Bar of Texas upheld its decision to disbar Charles Sebesta, the prosecutor (and former District Attorney of Washington and Burleson Counties) responsible for Graves' wrongful conviction.

For more information about these events or to arrange an interview with Senator Coash, please contact TCADP Executive Director Kristin Houlé at khoule@tcadp.org, 512-441-1808 (office), or 512-552-5948 (cell).

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TCADP is a statewide, grassroots advocacy organization based in Austin.

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