

Good Morning, Chairman Murphy and Members of the Committee!

SENATE JOURNAL  
EXHIBIT NO. 8  
DATE 2/2/11  
BY SBLS

I apologize for my absence this morning as I am recovering from pneumonia. In January, I testified to you, asking that the State of Montana increase the money for funeral expenses for a murder victim's family from a paltry \$3500 to \$5000, still not nearly enough to meet the cost. The extra \$1500 would not even come out of the General Fund, but that part of the Bill was not passed. Yet, here we are, building a \$300,000 addition onto Montana State Prison to house a death chamber. What is wrong with this picture?! What does that say about us?!

In spite of the massive expense of the death penalty, its lack of deterrence, its racist, capricious and sometimes even criminal administration, the more-than-likelihood of executing an innocent person (138 exonerees notwithstanding), still there are those who believe we need the death penalty as a matter of justice for the victims' families. We'll spend thousands of \$\$ to kill the perpetrator, which doesn't heal anyone, but can't come up with enough money to properly bury the innocent murder victim, clean up the mess and provide counseling for their families, which does help to heal.

I know whereof I speak: My youngest daughter, 7-year-old Susie, was a kidnap-murder victim here in Montana. The man who abducted her was a serial child-killer, responsible for the deaths of a number of Montana children. Without any plea-bargaining, he made his confession because he was not threatened with death, but was offered mandatory life imprisonment at my request, an alternative sentence in capital cases.

I readily admit that initially, I could have killed him myself, with my bare hands and a smile on my face – a normal, valid, understandable response for a grieving parent. However, to do so would only violate the goodness and beauty of my little girl's memory, and degrade and demean myself. To have the State commit the killing – to take on the same mindset as the killer did to solve his "problem" – would violate, demean and degrade Montana's own honor and dignity. An execution would not undo Susie's 10-days of torture, rape and death, would not restore her to my arms, and could only make another victim and another grieving family.

Murder victims' families have every right to fury and rage, but the laws of our land should not be based on gut-level, blood-thirsty desires for revenge. They should call us to higher, noble principles, more befitting a moral, civilized society. It's interesting that we are discussing the death penalty on the 424th anniversary of the beheading of Mary, Queen of Scots – my point being -- how far have we progressed from that fateful event of 1587??! Please vote to abolish the death penalty.

Thank you,  
Marietta Jaeger Lane