

**Hearing on HB 2167, to repeal Kansas death penalty
House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
Monday, February 13, at 1:30pm**

Testimony in support of HB 2167

Submitted by Rev. John Nathan Rovenstine

Dear Chairman Jennings and Members of the Committee:

In 1984, my wife began to push me towards formulating a pro-life ethic. The issue at that time was abortion. Through careful study, I soon realized that it is not enough to have an opinion on this watershed issue – one must take a stand on the side of life. I have firmly planted myself on the side of those who view life as beginning at conception, and having value as a bearer of God's image.

For many years I was content to stand with the pre-born without giving much thought to how a pro-life ethic might inform other pertinent issues that face our culture. Within the past few years, however, I have been encouraged to think through what a pro-life ethic looks like in regards to the death penalty.

This journey has led me to reverse my feelings on the subject. "Created in the image of God" matters. While there are significant differences between a pre-born baby, and a convicted criminal, both bear that image. Both are candidates for redemption, and restoration. My understanding of the Gospel of Jesus is that no one is beyond the bounds of his loving redemption.

I fully understand that significant issues of justice and law insert themselves into this discussion in a way that they don't when talking about the pre-born. Justice matters.

I believe justice can be served with other forms of punishment that restrain evil, protect the innocent, AND allow the convicted the chance at redemption. It can also be a quicker form of justice, which does not unnecessarily re-stir the deep emotions of victims' families by prolonging the legal process across decades.

In short, I have come to the conclusion that repealing the death penalty lines up with a fully formed pro-life ethic.

I am praying that the death penalty will be repealed in Kansas.

I would also note that throughout this journey I have been an evangelical Christian leader. I have not changed my beliefs in the powerful work of the gospel. In fact, I see this change of position as a maturing of my evangelical understanding of the Bible.

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