



Publications

Colorado Legislative Special Session Death Penalty Press Conference

-- By [Philip Tobias](#)

Coloradans Against the Death Penalty (CADP) took the lead in a press conference, which was held July 9, 2002 at 12:00 p.m. in the Press Conference Room at the Colorado State Capitol in Denver. The event was cosponsored by a coalition of local and national groups that are opposed to the death penalty, and its reinstatement in Colorado. Sponsors included the American Civil Liberties Union, American Friends Service Committee, Amnesty International, and the Colorado Criminal Defense Bar.

The Archdiocese of Denver, and the Colorado Catholic Conference, were represented in a [statement](#) from Archbishop Charles Chaput. Chaput urged lawmakers to seriously reexamine the death penalty in the legislature's next session. Chaput said, "Like all good citizens, Catholics want justice for both the innocent and the guilty. But we do not believe the death penalty accomplishes that for either."

The hot third-floor meeting room was packed, forcing many people in the crowd to listen from the hallway. Both Denver daily newspapers published articles based on the event and its speakers. Two television stations videotaped the press conference. WB2 later televised a piece on conference speaker William Nieves, who spoke about his eight years of false imprisonment, including six years on death row. Nieves was also featured in a [news article](#) and [news commentary](#).

Maria Augusteijn drove up from Colorado Springs to attend the press conference. She was especially impressed with speakers Bud Welch and Lorraine Parker. Parker is a Denver lawyer, former President of the Colorado Women's Bar Association, and former Texas prosecutor who handled a death penalty case in that state. Augusteijn was affected by Parker's accounts of following up with jurors after a verdict. The jurors were strained and unhappy about having a life and death decision imposed on them. Augusteijn stated that she had previously "heard of cases in which a former jury member required professional counseling to deal with the person's feelings of guilt at the time of execution."

Another powerful speaker was Bud Welch, who lost his daughter in the Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. Welch stressed the need for forgiveness, not retribution. It was revenge and retribution on the part of [Timothy McVeigh](#). Welch said, that led to the loss of Welch's daughter. Welch also debunked the myth that the death penalty leads to "closure" for victims' families. Since only about 1.5% of all murder convictions result in the death penalty, Welch asked, "What about the other 98.5% of families victimized by murder? How do those families attain closure?" Only by forgiving and moving on, said Welch, who was honored earlier this year with [CADP's Abolitionist of the Year award](#).

The sponsoring groups realize the Colorado legislature is being pressured into passing a quick law, as a result of the United States Supreme Court decision in Ring v. Arizona that nullified the state's existing death penalty law. Despite the legislation currently being debated, CADP President Denise Madden sees the current situation as an opportunity to abolish the death penalty. If not this week, then in a future legislative session.

"Over the last 26 years our legislature has debated which form of the death penalty we should have in Colorado," said the press conference sponsors. "This debate has been shaped based on an increasing desire to appear hard on crime and to make it easier for the prosecution to obtain a death sentence. Although a significant portion of Colorado citizens were and are opposed to the death penalty, the legislature hasn't entertained a thorough debate in recent memory over whether Colorado should even have a death penalty. In light of the recent Supreme Court decision, it is now time to reopen the dialogue.

"It's time to put the issue back in the spotlight and call for the legislature to conduct full and fair hearings into the propriety of the death penalty in Colorado and to sincerely consider the abolition of the death penalty. ... we ask the legislature to meaningfully consider abolition of the death penalty, if not at this special session, then at the next regular session of the legislature."

[Read the coalition's press conference statement](#)

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Our Mission

The mission of Coloradans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (CADP) is to make our justice system more effective by establishing smart alternatives that abolish capital punishment. CADP will do this through religious, educational, advocacy, and victims rights efforts.

Want more info?
E-mail info@coadp.org

[Read the PDF statement from the Archdiocese of Denver](#)

[Read the statement about rejected Senate Bill 02S-008 to abolish the death penalty](#)

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