

The New Mexico Conference of Churches finds the decision to place the reinstatement of the death penalty on the agenda of a special legislative session to be irresponsible. We oppose the reinstatement of the death penalty.

As people of faith, we support a justice system that is both humane and restorative. We uphold the victims of violent crime and their family members in their grief and suffering and promote measures that will facilitate their healing. We are greatly disturbed by the presence of violence in our communities. As ministers to many of our greatest societal problems, we work for solutions to violent crime that address our communities' need for healing not vengeance.

The legislature spent a decade debating the issue, ending with a bipartisan vote that abolished the practice of a state-sanctioned death penalty. This was a definitive decision and had many years of discussion and debate. That decision should remain final. We also call on all legislators to reject this proposed agenda item in the special session and in future legislative sessions. The national trend is to end this immoral, unnecessary, and ineffective practice. The exoneration of at least 156 innocent persons unjustly convicted and held on death row for many years, including four wrongly convicted people here in New Mexico, alarmingly illustrates the unethical and problematic use of the death penalty.

Consideration of this issue is a distraction from the numerous crises taking place in New Mexico. The financial and social needs of the state need the full attention of our public officials during the upcoming special legislative session. We, the judicatory heads of Protestant Denominations, join with the New Mexico Bishops of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Roman Catholic Church, in expressing our concern.

Signed:

Bishop Michael Vono, Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande

Bishop Jim Gonia, Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA

Provost Randal Partin, New Mexico Conference, UMC

Lead Minister, Charlotte Hoppe, Mission West, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest

Conference Pastor, Bill Lyons, Southwest Conference, UCC

Regional Minister, John Williams, Mission West, Community of Christ

Interim Executive Director, Kay Huggins, New Mexico Conference of Churches