The National Coalition Helps Secure Victory in Maryland!

**It’s the Sixth State in Six Years to Abolish Capital Punishment**

*By Abe Bonowitz*

Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley will soon sign legislation making Maryland the 18th state without capital punishment. The National Coalition’s contribution to this repeal campaign was pivotal and was years in the making.

After repeal legislation was modified in 2009 to restrict capital punishment instead of eliminating it, Maryland Citizens Against State Executions (MD CASE) saw the need for additional organizing assistance to move for full repeal. After a series of discussions with MD CASE’s Jane Henderson, the National Coalition agreed to lead a specific project that would make a key difference in the campaign — to build the grassroots base for abolition in key legislative districts.

Abe Bonowitz, NCADP’s Director of Affiliate Support, worked to implement the National Coalition’s plan.

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**Key National Partner: The Catholic Mobilizing Network**

*By Karen Clifton and Catherine Jarboe*

Since the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty (CMN) was first established in 2009, it has been a partner with the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. The purpose of CMN is to respond to the challenge of the U.S. Bishops’ Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty as it was articulated their 2005 statement, *A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*.

Late in the summer of 2008, veteran proponents of death penalty repeal gathered in Washington, D.C. to consider how to engage lay American Catholics in the Bishops’ campaign. Among them were Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*, and leaders from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, State Catholic Conferences, the National Coalition, Death Penalty Information Center, Equal Justice USA, murder victims’ organizations and major national Catholic and secular groups.

As a result of this meeting, CMN was formed to educate Catholics on the Church’s death penalty teaching through State Catholic Conferences, diocesan offices, and other Catholic organizations and institutions. With the involvement of Vicki Schieber, a leader of Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights, the idea of restorative justice became an integral part of CMN’s work.

The goal of CMN is to work alongside National Coalition affiliate groups and the State Catholic Conference to involve Catholics in faith-based advocacy work. CMN has worked to engage Catholics in the Maryland, Connecticut, Illinois, and California abolition campaigns. The organization customizes some of its educational

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A Message from
Diann Rust-Tierney

Dear friend:

Maryland is poised to become the 18th state to abolish the death penalty and the sixth state in six years to abandon the practice. I am so proud of the work the National Coalition did in Maryland, but the effort to end the death penalty in Maryland spanned many years and encompassed a number of important benchmarks:

- an Executive Moratorium instituted in 2002 by Governor Paris Glendenning that was later removed by Governor Robert Ehrlich;
- a comprehensive study of death sentencing practices which uncovered significant racial and geographical disparities in sentencing in 2003;
- a bi-partisan commission which recommended abolition;
- reform that made the death penalty statute the narrowest such law in the country; and
- finally repeal.

At the center of the effort was our affiliate organization, Maryland Citizens Against State Executions (MD CASE) and Executive Director, Jane Henderson. This campaign was a huge undertaking that drew on the talents and resources of many, including MD CASE staff member, Bonita Spikes, and MD CASE Board member and Capital Punishment Study Commissioner, Vicki Schieber, both of whom lost loved ones to murder.

They were among a number of survivors of homicide, like Ericcka Bridgeford, who made the personal sacrifice of telling their stories to help policymakers understand that an execution in the name of their loved one was far from the tribute they would want for their memory.

This effort was a broad-based effort that drew on the expertise of a wide array of organizations including Equal Justice USA, Amnesty International USA, People of Faith Against the Death Penalty, the Maryland Catholic Conference, ACLU of Maryland, Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, Murder Victims Families for Human Rights, and Witness to Innocence (especially the tireless work of Kirk Bloodsworth and Shujaa Graham).

In addition to those already listed, the roster of organizations comprising this collective effort is itself impressive:

- American Friends Service Committee
- Annapolis Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
- Archdiocese of Washington, Office of Social Development
- Baltimore Board of Rabbis
- Baltimore Yearly Meeting
- Campaign to End the Death Penalty
- Casa de Maryland
- Catholics Against Capital Punishment
- Catholic Mobilizing Network
- Central Maryland Ecumenical Council
- CURE MD
- CURE National
- ColorofChange.org
- Equality MD
- Howard County Board of Rabbis
- Jonah House
- League of Women Voters of Maryland
- Maryland Catholic Conference
- Maryland Green Party
- Maryland Justice Policy Institute
- Moms Rising
- National Black Police Association
- National Capital Presbytery
- National Lawyers Guild
- NAACP Baltimore City Branch
- NAACP Howard University Branch
- NAACP Legal Defense Fund
- NAACP Maryland State Conferences of Branches
- NAACP National
- NAACP Prince George's County Branch
- Peace and Justice Committee, Presbytery of Baltimore
- Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Progressive Maryland
- Project South, Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide
- St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Justice and Peace Committee
- Social Concerns Ministry of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Columbia
- Sowebo Center for Justice
- United Methodist Church, Baltimore-Washington Conference
- Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
- Viva House, Baltimore Catholic Worker
- War Resisters League
- Women's International League for Peace & Freedom
The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty supported the Maryland Repeal Campaign over the years as it does the efforts of our network of affiliated organizations.

In the two years leading up to the victory in Maryland, we kicked our intensive assistance program into high gear. We devoted staff time and resources to old-style grassroots organizing and relationship building that made the critical difference in getting the bill to the Senate floor.

Every state campaign is different and the needs differ depending upon the politics on the ground, staff capacity, resources available, and the timing of opportunities. The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty works closely with the local affiliate organization leading the campaign to identify the precise tools and support that the campaign will need to achieve victory.

For MD CASE, the need was for long-term relationship building as well as public awareness and grassroots mobilization. Consequently we carefully met those needs by pairing grassroots organizing with cutting-edge social media to help MD CASE and the coalition of supporting organizations to build the political will for repeal.

In addition, the efforts of the state and national NAACP provided indispensable strategic and political leadership to the repeal effort.

A critical component of this campaign was the high quality of leadership demonstrated by Governor Martin O’Malley, members of the legislative Black Caucus, members of the Senate Judicial Proceeding and House Judiciary Committees, and the Senate and House leadership and floor managers who assured a thoughtful and thorough debate in the Senate. This leadership was built on the vision and work of Senator Lisa Gladden and, before her, Delegate Salima Siler Marriott and others.

We can learn a lot from the victory in Maryland.

As the first state below the Mason-Dixon to repeal the death penalty and one of the more populous, geographically, racially, ethnically and economically diverse states, we know that repeal is possible in a southern state.

We know that we must build strong, diverse constituencies for repeal with all of the key stakeholders, including victim survivors of homicide (see our tribute to survivors on pages 5-6); law enforcement and correctional officials; communities of faith; neighborhood leaders; death row exonerees; family members of people on death row; and family members of incarcerated people. Every voice counts!

When all is said and done, the facts are on our side. Our job is to work to make sure that we, the stakeholders in this system of justice, get a fair hearing.

When we do get a fair hearing in the legislature or in the court of public opinion, popular support for capital punishment weakens and progress is possible.

Maryland is not the only story, although it is a big one. In Delaware and around the country citizen-led efforts are underway to end capital punishment state-by-state.

We thank you for standing with the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty as we stand with the millions of people around the world and the dedicated network of state-based organization that are committed to ending the abomination of capital punishment.

The progress we are making against the death penalty is only possible because of the rich diversity of people and organizations who have come together around a common goal. This issue of Lifelines highlights the work of one of our key partners, the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty. Whether you are a member of a faith community or not, I hope you find this issue of Lifelines to be informative, enjoyable and inspiring.

Peace and onward,

Diann
USCCB Hosts A National Death Penalty Summit

By Michael Stone

In November, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops convened 42 national and diocesan social justice and Respect Life leaders for a unique strategic conversation about death penalty repeal. The group tapped into the energy and momentum from recent state level successes.

NCADP Executive Director Diann Rust-Tierney set the stage by speaking about the national context of and recent momentum toward abolition. “The religious community has a critically important role to play in the dialogue about capital punishment and the effort to end it. We are seeking a change in the way that we as human beings see one another and respond to one another when the worst possible thing imaginable occurs. That quest is pragmatic and policy driven, but also deeply spiritual.”

During a panel session Marilou Gervacio, Director of Social Services at the Catholic Conference of Illinois, and Allen Sanchez, Executive Director of the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops, shared their experiences with successful abolition campaigns in their states.

During lunch Vicky Schieber, Education Coordinator for the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty, shared the story of her daughter Shannon’s brutal rape and murder. Vicki spoke about her personal journey of working for the abolition of the death penalty to honor the memory of her social-justice-oriented child.

Richard A. Viguerie, the Chairman of Conservative HQ, then shared how his faith informed his own opposition to capital punishment. “I’m a Catholic. Because I am a follower of Jesus Christ, I oppose the death penalty. I’m a conservative as well. Because my political philosophy recognizes that government is too often used by humans for the wrong ends, I find it quite logical to oppose capital punishment.”

The day ended with a panel, Working in Coalitions, Juggling Legislative Priorities. The Executive Directors of three State Catholic Conferences discussed their experiences working with broad abolition coalitions in Maryland, Kentucky, and Colorado.

After a brief wrap-up session Anthony Granado, Policy Advisor in the USCCB Office of Domestic Social Development, challenged all of the participants to help build a “culture of life” by working to abolish the death penalty throughout the country.
Highlights of our work include:

♦ Generated over 700 constituent contacts via postal mail into senate offices.
♦ Organized a forum on the needs of crime victims and the services available to them at a local police station with over a hundred people in attendance.
♦ Organized events featuring murder victim family members, death row survivors, and Sr. Helen Prejean including one-on-one visits with key legislators.
♦ Secured endorsement for repeal from broad and diverse religious communities in Maryland for repeal.
♦ Organized church and synagogue events where clergy asked members to sign up and write to key senators.
♦ Garnered significant media coverage in the local newspapers and on television.

Victims’ Families Lead the Way in Maryland Repeal Campaign

By Michael Stone

The family members of murder victims have a unique voice and have an essential role in the struggle and debate about ending capital punishment.

There is no right way or wrong way for survivors of homicide to feel or think about capital punishment. We lift up the work of survivors of homicide who have joined our efforts to acknowledge the special sacrifices they have made to contribute to our collective success.

The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty is proud to partner with organizations such as Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, Murder Victims Families for Human Rights and The Journey of Hope.

As we celebrate the enormous victory of Maryland, soon to be the 6th state to repeal the death penalty in six years, we wanted to salute the efforts of three individuals without whose selfless efforts the victory in Maryland would not have been possible.

The three people highlighted below were tireless advocates for the abolition of the death penalty in Maryland as well as increased services for those who suffer from homicide. They have bravely shared their story, building bridges and connections to lawmakers and diverse segments of the community — changing hearts and minds.

Bonnita Spikes, whose husband Michael was murdered at a New York City convenience store in 1994, spoke at a recent rally about the challenge of suddenly becoming a single mother and sole breadwinner and the relatively few resources available to her for support.

Before his death, Michael had served on juries and shared that he could never sentence anyone to death because of inequities in the system. Neither Bonnita nor her police officer son supports the death penalty. Their faith also informs their opposition to capital punishment.

Since 2005 Bonnita has worked as an organizer and victim advocate for Maryland Citizens Against State Support NCADP!

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Executions. She has testified at the Maryland legislature, met with individual legislators, given presentations across the state, spoken at rallies, and worked with survivors of homicide in Baltimore. “Over and over, I have found families in dire need of support and traumatic grief counseling services. I have come to know people, young and old, who have little or no access to professional help coping with their overwhelming loss. They are struggling to hold their households together, to help their families grieve and survive the trauma one day at a time.”

**Vicki Schieber** didn’t care about the death penalty before her daughter Shannon was raped and murdered in 1998, while pursuing a doctorate in Philadelphia at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. It took years for investigators to find Shannon’s killer. When prosecutors sought the death penalty against the perpetrator in 2002, Vicki and her husband argued against it. “We didn’t want him put to death. This wasn’t the way we were going to find peace and closure.” Vicki has become deeply involved in the repeal effort over the past decade. She has testified before the Maryland legislature and spoken with individual legislators dozens of times, and she serves on the board of Maryland Citizens Against State Executions. She has taken her story to 22 states as she urges an end to capital punishment, mostly because of the harmful effects it often has on the family survivors of a homicide victim. Vicki also serves as the Education Coordinator for the Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty, and had been a board member of Murder Victims’ Families for Human Rights until recently.

Though she has rejoiced as other states have struck down capital punishment, Vicki said seeing the same thing happen in Maryland would be different. “Shannon was born and raised in Maryland and was a great supporter of social justice issues during her 23 years with us. If she had known about the biases and arbitrariness in the application of our U.S. death penalty system, she would have become actively involved in abolition efforts. My work is all done to honor my daughter.”

**Erricka Bridgeford** also knows the grief of murder intimately. Her brother David was murdered in 2007. “He was my first best friend, first love, first baby. He was my brother.” Since 2009 Erricka has advocated for an end to Maryland’s death penalty. She has testified at the Maryland legislature, spoken to the media repeatedly, and shared her powerful story at a 2011 death penalty prayer service at the Basilica of the Assumption in Baltimore.

“You start to realize that revenge is taking up space that you need to heal. I have learned that one more dead body cannot be justice. I want life in return for my brother’s death. He is worth forgiveness in return for violence.” Erricka is also involved in the N.E.W. World Movement, an effort to bring resources to rebuild and support the neighborhood where she grew up in honor of her brother and other friends who were killed in that community.

The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty salutes these wonderful individuals and their unique and important contributions to the successful Maryland abolition campaign!

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**Books From the Abolition Library**

**Where Justice and Mercy Meet:**

**Catholic Opposition to the Death Penalty**

Liturgical Press, 2013

The Catholic Mobilizing Network (CMN) is proud to introduce its new book — *Where Justice and Mercy Meet: Catholic Opposition to the Death Penalty*, a comprehensive exploration of the Catholic stance against capital punishment. The book’s editors — Dr. Trudy Conway, Dr. David McCarthy, and CMN’s Vicki Schieber — shape the book with their chapter openings. This book shares the broad perspective of Catholic social teaching, woven with secular arguments against the death penalty.

The book is the result of CMN conversations with family members of murder victims, chaplains for condemned inmates and leaders in the death penalty movement with the faculty at Mount St. Mary’s University. It offers new insights into capital punishment; provides revealing information about methods of execution; and explores national and international trends and movements related to the death penalty. The book also addresses how the death penalty is linked with racism and mental disabilities and its disproportionately impact on the poor.

When ordering *Where Justice and Mercy Meet* directly from CMN, you help to support the organization’s mission. To order, contact CMN at # 202-541-5290 or <info@catholicsmobilizing.org>. The cost is $18.95 and CMN beats Amazon’s shipping cost!
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materials to relate specifically to states where legislative action is taking place – for example, *Talking Points on the Death Penalty* for Maryland. Many other state-specific talking points are available in Spanish and English on the CMN website <http://catholicsmobilizing.org/resources/>.

**The Catholic Voice**

Numbering more than 67 million, Catholics comprise about 22 percent of our nation’s 309 million citizens. CMN seeks to significantly increase the number of American Catholics who embrace the Church’s teaching that every human life is sacred and comes from God and that our laws need to protect each person from natural conception until natural death. CMN educates that the death penalty is a pro-life issue and engages Catholics in state repeal efforts.

CMN staff and speakers present at national and regional Catholic conferences, provide workshops and exhibit its resources at large conventions. Its speakers can supplement state events with Catholic experts such as Kentucky State Conference Director, Father Pat Delahanty, and former chair of Murder Victims Families for Human Rights, Vicki Schieber.

**CMN Liturgical and Inspirational Resources**

CMN has developed resources for the individual, parish, community and institution that can be used throughout the liturgical year. There are preaching resources, including homily notes and reflections for priests. CMN also has seasonal resources appropriate for Lent, Advent and Respect Life Month as well as prayer services and prayer cards. The CMN e-newsletter has featured resources such as prayer vigils, Stations of the Cross, diocesan event materials, and many other materials. Each issue of the e-newsletter highlights a state, spotlighting the work of the Catholic Conference and the National Coalition affiliate, and shares new resources as they are produced.

**Other Resources for Catholics**

CMN’s educational resources are aimed at parishes, youth and our growing Catholic Spanish-speaking population. Workshops on the death penalty are customized to these particular audiences with special messaging to reach each particular group.

Sr. Ilaria Buonriposi, CMS, manages outreach to the Latino Catholic community, provides workshop in Spanish, and translates CMN materials into Spanish. Wayne Hipley, CMN’s new Youth Ministry Coordinator, has designed educational pieces for middle and high school students, attends national youth events and works individually with state affiliates to take advantage of opportunities to reach our next generation of Catholics.

All CMN materials are available on the website and are downloadable <http://catholicsmobilizing.org/resources/>.

CMN has developed workshops on restorative justice for three target audiences – for general audiences, youth and Spanish-speaking groups. The work of CMN brings opportunities to coordinate with other groups that assist victims who have been affected by violence.

In the upcoming year, CMN plans to exhibit and present in dozens of venues across the country. CMN is embarking on new ventures to improve media outreach and effectively reach rural populations in key states to support the work being done by National Coalition affiliate groups.

For more information or assistance, contact CMN at # 202-541-5290 or <info@catholicsmobilizing.org>.

**CMN Staff Members & Contact Info**

*CMN helps get Catholics involved in death penalty repeal campaigns. Let us know how we can help in your state.*

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**CMN Works to Reach the Growing Latino Population**

*By Sr. Ilaria Buonriposi, CMS*

In 2012, 68% of Latinos self-identified as Catholic. They bring a new cultural perspective to the Catholic Church in the United States. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Latinos are 16.7% of the nation’s population and more than 20% of the population of Texas, Nevada, Colorado, California, Florida, Arizona, and New Mexico. Twenty-six states have Latino populations of at least 300,000.

The Catholic Mobilizing Network is reaching out to the growing Spanish-speaking Catholic population to raise awareness about the death penalty as a life issue.

CMN works to share arguments against the use of the death penalty and to encourage Latinos to contribute their voices and unique perspectives to the movement to end capital punishment.

All CMN materials have been translated into Spanish — workshops, fact sheets, liturgical resources, prayer cards, Catholic social teaching pamphlets, youth resources, and the “Dead Man Walking One-Act Play.”

The Catholic Mobilizing Network has developed specific messaging for its death penalty resources and a new restorative justice workshop. Sr. Ilaria Buonriposi, CMS, has created multiple Spanish radio podcasts, which are being distributed over Spanish Catholic radio stations nationwide. Sr. Ilaria presents workshops in Spanish at conferences and exhibits CMN materials at meetings.

**CMN Catholic Youth Resources**

*By Wayne Hipley*

After a weekend interacting with youth ministry and religious education professionals at the National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry (NCCYM) in November, it was clear that Catholic youth workers speak a language all their own.

CMN has developed “youth ministry friendly” materials to help young Catholics form their consciences about the death penalty — a media resource list, prayer and worship resources and other materials.

“Forgive... and Forget?” is a new resource for middle school-age youth (grades 6-8) that explores Catholic teaching on the death penalty as well as forgiveness, atonement and mercy. A similar resource for high school youth will soon follow. These resources are available for the abolition movement to distribute as they see fit.

Other CMN goals include: better social media integration; standalone retreat experiences for youth; multi-session catechesis and more.

CMN is drawing on ideas that youth workers shared — teaching human dignity through prison visits; interactive resources that teach advocacy concepts; and integration into workcamp experiences and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

We all look forward to the day when the death penalty is no longer an option in the United States criminal justice system and the question for us becomes, “What next?”

Developing catechesis on restorative justice is the next big CMN project. It is important that, as we share teaching on capital punishment, we also create an environment where forgiveness, mercy and healing are understood.

Forming these ideas into usable concepts for youth ministry settings is an exciting endeavor.

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**Enhancing Communication!**

This is an exciting time for abolitionists which demands that we communicate with more people more quickly. The National Coalition is reorganizing to meet this challenge. Anita Grabowski is now Communications Director after serving as a field organizer for over two years. Michael Stone has added the role of Publications Manager to his ongoing field organizing work. All staff will support our communications work in some way, including development staff. We welcome Andy Gryll, new Development Manager, to our National Coalition team!

As part of this effort, the National Coalition redesigned our logo which you will see in all of our communications. We continue to light the flame for justice, dignity and hope. The flame illuminates our path forward while also holding vigil for all harmed by injustice and violence.

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CMN is proud to sponsor I Want To Serve, a coalition that wants to end restrictions of people who oppose the death penalty from serving on juries in capital cases.

For more info, go to [http://www.iwanttoserve.org/](http://www.iwanttoserve.org/)
Delaware Poised for Repeal

By Abe Bonowitz

On the heels of Maryland passing a bill to repeal the death penalty, its neighbor to the north has not wasted time in following suit. On March 26, the Delaware Senate passed a repeal bill, sending the legislation to the House.

With the help of its donors and volunteers in the National Action Team, the National Coalition is lending its full support. Abe Bonowitz, NCADP’s Director of Affiliate Support, has worked with the Delaware campaign from the start to develop and implement a repeal strategy. Our staff spends regular time on site with the Delaware team as one of key strategic partners in this effort.

The National Coalition is working with our partners Witness to Innocence and Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation to coordinate visits from “witnesses to the failings of the death penalty” with Delaware’s elected officials. The National Coalition has also helped mobilize key constituencies to weigh in on the issue, including labor unions and the Jewish community.

The Delaware House is expected to take up the repeal bill at the end of April. So it’s not too late to get involved!

Get updates on the campaign at www.NCADP.org and join our National Action Team as we make “the First State” the next state to end the death penalty!

NCADP Major Funders:

Atlantic Philanthropies  ♦  Open Society Foundations