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INFORMATION

Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty
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**Public Wants to Cut Death Penalty
and Spend for Better Purposes**

Nearly three hundred people who participated in public opinion surveys urged cutting the amount of money government spends on the death penalty, and shifting that money instead toward education, mental health services, drug and alcohol treatment, help for victims’ families, and other crime prevention efforts.

People attending Olympia’s Capital City Pride Festival on Saturday June 22 and Tacoma’s Ethnic Fest on Saturday-Sunday July 27-28 were offered a stack of ten pennies representing the amount of current spending on the death penalty, and invited to “spend” them for the best ways to reduce crime and serve the local community.

The results were:

	Sat June 22 in Olympia	Sat-Sun July 27-28 in Tacoma	TOTAL
Death penalty	19	36	55
Teachers	412	368	780
Mental health counselors	421	331	752
Drug & alcohol treatment	261	337	598
Help for victims’ families	180	260	440
Crime prevention efforts	173	136	309

The survey’s organizers affirm that nationwide research has consistently shown that the death penalty is vastly more expensive than a sentence of life without possibility of parole. A death penalty case costs much more at the initial trial, even before any appeals. This is because the complexity of death penalty trials drives up the costs significantly. Indeed, each death penalty case requires two complete trials – one to determine guilt or innocence, and a second trial to determine whether to impose a death sentence or the default of life without any possibility of parole.

Especially during a time of severe budget crises, governments need to spend tax dollars wisely, the organizers explained, and the public at these two summertime events spoke clearly that they insist on more effective ways to reduce crime. They felt that the death penalty was diverting tax dollars from better alternatives.

Also, 228 people at these events signed postcards urging their state legislators to abolish the death penalty.

This event is sponsored by the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Committee for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Contact Emily Hammargren, (360) 352-0695 deathpenalty@olympiafor.org, or Glen Anderson (360) 491-9093 glen@olympiafor.org.

More information about the death penalty is at the websites for the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation (www.olympiafor.org and www.olympiafor.org/death_penalty.htm), the Safe and Just Alternatives Campaign (www.sjawa.org), and the Washington Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (www.abolishdeathpenalty.org).

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