

Our Views: State Legislature Should Act on Death Penalty

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The Washington State Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the death penalty for a man who brutally killed his wife and two of her daughters in 1999.

Dayva Cross was sentenced to death for the crimes 13 years ago in 2001.

It's unlikely the sentence will be carried out any time soon.

Gov. Jay Inslee declared a moratorium on capital punishment earlier this year, declaring that no executions would be permitted as long as he is in office.

Many legislators and prosecutors were dismayed by the decision at the time, wondering how the governor could unilaterally ban something that remains legal in the state of Washington.

Others were happy with the decision, declaring that it spells at least a temporary end to what they consider to be a brutal and inhumane punishment.

Unfortunately, the governor's move did nothing to solve the issue aside from perhaps starting the conversation.

There are currently nine inmates on death row in Washington, all of them found guilty of heinous and violent crimes, many of which involved the death of children.

Those left in the wake of the crimes — mothers, fathers, siblings and children — are left to wonder why the governor would exercise kindness and leniency to those who provided none to their innocent victims.

While we believe there is value to the death penalty, we understand the concerns of those who oppose it.

On rare occasion, innocent people are convicted, though the percentages of those on death row who could be not guilty is even smaller than the general population. Rarely, the method of lethal injection used to end the lives of death row inmates is ineffective, as was the case for an Oklahoma inmate this year who suffered a heart attack and died well after the dose was administered.

There is also broad opposition to the idea that the death penalty acts as a deterrent against would-be criminals.

The state Legislature should in its next session take up the issue of capital punishment.

If there is support for Inslee's stance, then legislators should act quickly to provide legislation. If not, then lawmakers should look for ways to provide a sense of certainty for the families of victims who are currently living in limbo.

The Washington State Supreme Court has upheld a penalty that effectively fails to exist under the current governor's leadership.

The residents of Washington deserve more than a temporary patch over a matter of life and death.