

Senator Barack Obama
(via e-mail)

February 6, 2006

Letter from Senator Barack Obama

Dear Dave:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the death penalty.

I appreciate hearing your thoughts on this important matter, and thought your speech was excellent.

If properly administered, the death penalty may be appropriate in certain limited circumstances, such as for acts of terrorism or in the case of a serial murderer. However, as we have seen in Illinois and elsewhere, the death penalty has not always been uniformly or appropriately applied. That is why our state, appropriately I think, has imposed a moratorium on this ultimate punishment.

A fundamental principle of our legal system, indeed of our society, is that every citizen should be guaranteed due process without regard to personal means. The establishment of effective legal safeguards to protect against wrongful convictions should be a high priority in a democracy like ours. Surely, this standard should be most vigorously applied to the ultimate sanction – the death penalty – where mistakes are irreversible.

I served in the Illinois State Senate during our state's struggle with the imposition of the death penalty. As a state senator, I helped develop legislation that requires video-taping of police interrogations in all capital cases to ensure that no suspect is coerced into making a confession. I was also a cosponsor of comprehensive legislation that reformed the application of the death penalty and supported a moratorium on all executions in Illinois until it is determined that the state judicial process produces a burden of proof in death penalty cases that eliminates the possibility of error. I think that standard should apply to death penalty at the Federal level as well.

Again, Dave, thank you for contacting me.

I look forward to staying in touch.

Sincerely,

Barack Obama
United States Senator

P.S. Our system does not allow direct response to this email. However, if you would like to contact me again, please use the form on the web site: <http://obama.senate.gov/contact/>