### 108TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

## S. 132

To place a moratorium on executions by the Federal Government and urge the States to do the same, while a National Commission on the Death Penalty reviews the fairness of the imposition of the death penalty.

## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

January 9, 2003

Mr. Feingold (for himself, Mr. Levin, Mr. Corzine, and Mr. Durbin) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

## A BILL

To place a moratorium on executions by the Federal Government and urge the States to do the same, while a National Commission on the Death Penalty reviews the fairness of the imposition of the death penalty.

- 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
- 2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
- 3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
- 4 This Act may be cited as the "National Death Pen-
- 5 alty Moratorium Act of 2003".

# TITLE I—MORATORIUM ON THE DEATH PENALTY

3	SEC. 101. FINDINGS.
4	Congress makes the following findings:
5	(1) General findings.—
6	(A) The administration of the death pen-
7	alty by the Federal government and the States
8	should be consistent with our Nation's funda-
9	mental principles of fairness, justice, equality,
10	and due process.
11	(B) Congress should consider that more
12	than ever Americans are questioning the use of
13	the death penalty and calling for assurances
14	that it be fairly applied.
15	(C) Documented unfairness in the Federal
16	system requires Congress to act and suspend
17	Federal executions. Additionally, substantial
18	evidence of unfairness throughout death penalty
19	States justifies further investigation by Con-
20	gress.
21	(2) Administration of the death penalty
22	BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.—
23	(A) The fairness of the administration of
24	the Federal death penalty has recently come

1	under serious scrutiny, specifically raising ques-
2	tions of racial and geographic disparities:
3	(i) Almost 75 percent of Federal
4	death row inmates are members of minor-
5	ity groups.
6	(ii) A report released by the Depart-
7	ment of Justice on September 12, 2000,
8	found that 80 percent of defendants who
9	were charged with death-eligible offenses
10	under Federal law and whose cases were
11	submitted by the United States attorneys
12	under the Department's death penalty de-
13	cision-making procedures were African
14	American, Hispanic American, or members
15	of other minority groups.
16	(iii) The Department of Justice report
17	shows that United States attorneys in only
18	5 of 94 Federal districts—1 each in Vir-
19	ginia, Maryland, Puerto Rico, and 2 in
20	New York—submit 40 percent of all cases
21	in which the death penalty is considered.
22	(iv) The Department of Justice report
23	shows that United States attorneys who
24	have frequently recommended seeking the
25	death penalty are often from States with a

1	high number of executions under State
2	law, including Texas, Virginia, and Mis-
3	souri.
4	(v) The Department of Justice report
5	shows that white defendants are more like-
6	ly than black defendants to negotiate plea
7	bargains saving them from the death pen-
8	alty in Federal cases.
9	(vi) A study conducted by the House
10	Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Con-
11	stitutional Rights in 1994 concluded that
12	89 percent of defendants selected for cap-
13	ital prosecution under the Anti-Drug
14	Abuse Act of 1988 were either African
15	American or Hispanic American.
16	(vii) The National Institute of Justice
17	has already set into motion a comprehen-
18	sive study of these racial and geographic
19	disparities.
20	(viii) Federal executions should not
21	proceed until these disparities are fully
22	studied, discussed, and the federal death
23	penalty process is subjected to necessary
24	remedial action.

- 1 (B) In addition to racial and geographic
  2 disparities in the administration of the federal
  3 death penalty, other serious questions exist
  4 about the fairness and reliability of federal
  5 death penalty prosecutions:
  6 (i) Federal prosecutors rely heavily on
  - (i) Federal prosecutors rely heavily on bargained-for testimony from accomplices of the capital defendant, which is often obtained in exchange for not seeking the death penalty against the accomplices. This practice creates a serious risk of false testimony.
  - (ii) Federal prosecutors are not required to provide discovery sufficiently ahead of trial to permit the defense to be prepared to use this information effectively in defending their clients.
  - (iii) The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in increasing isolation from the rest of the nation's law enforcement agencies, refuses to make electronic recordings of interrogations that produce confessions, thus making subsequent scrutiny of the legality and reliability of such interrogations more difficult.

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

1	(iv) Federal prosecutors rely heavily
2	on predictions of "future dangerous-
3	ness"—predictions deemed unreliable and
4	misleading by the American Psychiatric
5	Association and the American Psycho-
6	logical Association—to secure death sen-
7	tences.
8	(3) Administration of the death penalty
9	BY THE STATES.—
10	(A) The punishment of death carries an
11	especially heavy burden to be free from arbi-
12	trariness and discrimination. The Supreme
13	Court has held that "super due process", a
14	higher standard than that applied in regular
15	criminal trials, is necessary to meet constitu-
16	tional requirements. There is significant evi-
17	dence that States are not providing this height-
18	ened level of due process. For example:
19	(i) In the most comprehensive review
20	of modern death sentencing, Professor
21	James Liebman and researchers at Colum-
22	bia University found that, during the pe-
23	riod 1973 to 1995, 68 percent of all death

penalty cases reviewed were overturned due

to serious constitutional errors. In the

24

wake of the Liebman study, 6 States (Arizona, Maryland, North Carolina, Illinois,
Indiana, and Nebraska) have conducted
additional studies. These studies expose
additional problems.

- (ii) Forty percent of the cases overturned were reversed in Federal court after having been upheld by the States.
- (B) The high rate of error throughout all death penalty jurisdictions suggests that there is a grave risk that innocent persons may have been, or will likely be, wrongfully executed. Although the Supreme Court has never conclusively addressed the issue of whether executing an innocent person would in and of itself violate the Constitution, in Herrara v. Collins, 506 U.S. 390 (1993), a majority of the court expressed the view that a persuasive demonstration of actual innocence would violate substantive due process rendering imposition of a death sentence unconstitutional. In any event, the wrongful conviction and sentencing of a person to death is a serious concern for many Americans. For example:

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

1	(i) After 13 innocent people were re-
2	leased from Illinois death row in the same
3	period that the State had executed 12 peo-
4	ple, on January 31, 2000, Governor
5	George Ryan of Illinois imposed a morato-
6	rium on executions until he could be "sure
7	with moral certainty that no innocent man
8	or woman is facing a lethal injection, no
9	one will meet that fate".
10	(ii) Since 1973, over 100 innocent
11	persons sitting on death rows across the
12	country have been exonerated, most after
13	serving lengthy sentences.
14	(C) Wrongful convictions create a serious
15	public safety problem because the true killer is
16	still at large, while the innocent person lan-
17	guishes in prison.
18	(D) There are many systemic problems
19	that result in innocent people being convicted
20	such as mistaken identification, reliance on jail-
21	house informants, reliance on faulty forensic
22	testing and no access to reliable DNA testing.
23	For example:
24	(i) A study of cases of innocent people
25	who were later exonerated, conducted by

attorneys Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld with "The Innocence Project" at Cardozo Law School, showed that mistaken identifications of eyewitnesses or victims contributed to 84 percent of the wrongful convictions.

(ii) Many persons on death row were convicted prior to 1994 and did not receive the benefit of modern DNA testing. At least 10 individuals sentenced to death have been exonerated through post-conviction DNA testing, some within days of execution. Yet in spite of the current wide-spread prevalence and availability of DNA testing, many States have procedural barriers blocking introduction of post-conviction DNA testing. More than 30 States have laws that require a motion for a new trial based on newly discovered evidence to be filed within 6 months or less.

(iii) The widespread use of jailhouse snitches who earn reduced charges or sentences by fabricating "admissions" by fellow inmates to unsolved crimes can lead to wrongful convictions.

(iv) The misuse of forensic evidence
can lead to wrongful convictions. A report
from the Texas Defender Service entitled
"A State of Denial: Texas and the Death
Penalty" found 160 cases of official foren-
sic misconduct including 121 cases where
expert psychiatrists testified "with absolute
certainty that the defendant would be a
danger in the future", often without even
interviewing the defendant.
(E) The sixth amendment to the Constitu-
tion guarantees all accused persons access to
competent counsel. The Supreme Court set out
standards for determining competency in the
case of Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668
(1984). Unfortunately, there is unequal access
to competent counsel throughout death penalty
States. For example:
(i) Ninety percent of capital defend-
ants cannot afford to hire their own attor-
ney.
(ii) Fewer than one-quarter of the 38
death penalty States have set any stand-
ards for competency of counsel and in

those few States, these standards were set

1	only recently. In most States, any person
2	who passes a bar examination, even if that
3	attorney has never represented a client in
4	any type of case, may represent a client in
5	a death penalty case.
6	(iii) Thirty-seven percent of capital
7	cases were reversed because of ineffective
8	assistance of counsel, according to the Co-
9	lumbia study.
10	(iv) The Texas report noted problems
11	with Texas defense attorneys who slept
12	through capital trials, ignored obvious ex-
13	culpatory evidence, suffered discipline for
14	ethical lapses or for being under the influ-
15	ence of drugs or alcohol while representing
16	an indigent capital defendant at trial.
17	(v) Poor lawyering was also cited by
18	Governor Ryan in Illinois as a basis for a
19	moratorium. More than half of all capital
20	defendants there were represented by law-
21	yers who were later disciplined or dis-
22	barred for unethical conduct.
23	(F) The Supreme Court has held that it is
24	a violation of the eighth amendment to impose

the death penalty in a manner that is arbitrary,

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

capricious, or discriminatory. McKlesky v. Kemp, 481 U.S. 279 (1987). Studies consistently indicate racial disparity in the application of the death penalty both for the defendants and the victims. The death penalty is disparately applied in various regions throughout the country, suggesting arbitrary administration of the death penalty based on where the prosecution takes place. For example:

(i) Since 1976, 45 percent of death row inmates were white, 43 percent were black, 9 percent were Hispanic, and 2 percent were of other racial groups. Of the victims in the underlying murder, 81 percent were white, 14 percent were black, and 4 percent were Hispanic. While over 80 percent of completed capital cases involve white victims, nationally only 50 percent of murder victims are white. These figures show a continuing trend since reinstatement of the modern death penalty of a predominance of white victims' cases and implies that white victims are considered more valuable in the criminal justice system.

1	(ii) Executions are conducted pre-
2	dominately in southern States. Ninety per-
3	cent of all executions in 2000 were con-
4	ducted in the south. Only 3 States outside
5	the south, Arizona, California, and Mis-
6	souri, conducted an execution in 2000.
7	Texas accounted for almost as many execu-
8	tions as all the remaining States combined.
9	(G) The Supreme Court recently reversed
10	itself and has ruled the execution of the men-
11	tally retarded unconstitutional and in violation
12	of the Eighth Amendment. (Atkins v. Virginia,
13	536 U.S. 304 (2002)).
13 14	536 U.S. 304 (2002)).  SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATO-
14	SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATO-
14 15	SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM.
<ul><li>14</li><li>15</li><li>16</li><li>17</li></ul>	SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATO- RIUM.  (a) IN GENERAL.—The Federal Government shall
<ul><li>14</li><li>15</li><li>16</li><li>17</li></ul>	SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM.  (a) IN GENERAL.—The Federal Government shall not carry out any sentence of death imposed under Fed-
14 15 16 17 18	SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM.  (a) IN GENERAL.—The Federal Government shall not carry out any sentence of death imposed under Federal law until the Congress considers the final findings and
14 15 16 17 18 19	SEC. 102. FEDERAL AND STATE DEATH PENALTY MORATORIUM.  (a) IN GENERAL.—The Federal Government shall not carry out any sentence of death imposed under Federal law until the Congress considers the final findings and recommendations of the National Commission on the
<ul><li>14</li><li>15</li><li>16</li><li>17</li><li>18</li><li>19</li><li>20</li></ul>	RIUM.  (a) In General.—The Federal Government shall not carry out any sentence of death imposed under Federal law until the Congress considers the final findings and recommendations of the National Commission on the Death Penalty in the report submitted under section
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	RIUM.  (a) In General.—The Federal Government shall not carry out any sentence of death imposed under Federal law until the Congress considers the final findings and recommendations of the National Commission on the Death Penalty in the report submitted under section 202(c)(2) and the Congress enacts legislation repealing
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	RIUM.  (a) In General.—The Federal Government shall not carry out any sentence of death imposed under Federal law until the Congress considers the final findings and recommendations of the National Commission on the Death Penalty in the report submitted under section 202(c)(2) and the Congress enacts legislation repealing this section and implements or rejects the guidelines and

1	penalty should enact a moratorium on executions to allow
2	time to review whether the administration of the death
3	penalty by that State is consistent with constitutional re-
4	quirements of fairness, justice, equality, and due process
5	TITLE II—NATIONAL COMMIS-
6	SION ON THE DEATH PEN-
7	ALTY
8	SEC. 201. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.
9	(a) Establishment.—There is established a com-
10	mission to be known as the National Commission on the
11	Death Penalty (in this title referred to as the "Commis
12	sion").
13	(b) Membership.—
14	(1) Appointment.—Members of the Commis
15	sion shall be appointed by the President in consulta-
16	tion with the Attorney General and the Chairmer
17	and Ranking Members of the Committees on the Ju-
18	diciary of the House of Representatives and the Sen-
19	ate.
20	(2) Composition.—The Commission shall be
21	composed of 15 members, of whom—
22	(A) 3 members shall be Federal or State
23	prosecutors;
24	(B) 3 members shall be attorneys experi-
25	enced in capital defense:

1	(C) 2 members shall be current or former
2	Federal or State judges;
3	(D) 2 members shall be current or former
4	Federal or State law enforcement officials; and
5	(E) 5 members shall be individuals from
6	the public or private sector who have knowledge
7	or expertise, whether by experience or training,
8	in matters to be studied by the Commission,
9	which may include—
10	(i) officers or employees of the Fed-
11	eral Government or State or local govern-
12	ments;
13	(ii) members of academia, nonprofit
14	organizations, the religious community, or
15	industry; and
16	(iii) other interested individuals.
17	(3) BALANCED VIEWPOINTS.—In appointing the
18	members of the Commission, the President shall, to
19	the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the
20	membership of the Commission is fairly balanced
21	with respect to the opinions of the members of the
22	Commission regarding support for or opposition to
23	the use of the death penalty.
24	(4) Date.—The appointments of the initial
25	members of the Commission shall be made not later

- 1 than 30 days after the date of enactment of this
- 2 Act.
- 3 (c) Period of Appointment.—Each member shall
- 4 be appointed for the life of the Commission.
- 5 (d) VACANCIES.—A vacancy in the Commission shall
- 6 not affect the powers of the Commission, but shall be filled
- 7 in the same manner as the original appointment.
- 8 (e) Initial Meeting.—Not later than 30 days after
- 9 all initial members of the Commission have been ap-
- 10 pointed, the Commission shall hold the first meeting.
- 11 (f) Meetings.—The Commission shall meet at the
- 12 call of the Chairperson.
- 13 (g) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the
- 14 Commission shall constitute a quorum for conducting
- 15 business, but a lesser number of members may hold hear-
- 16 ings.
- 17 (h) Chair.—The President shall designate 1 member
- 18 appointed under subsection (a) to serve as the Chair of
- 19 the Commission.
- 20 (i) Rules and Procedures.—The Commission
- 21 shall adopt rules and procedures to govern the proceedings
- 22 of the Commission.
- 23 SEC. 202. DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.
- 24 (a) Study.—

- (1) In General.—The Commission shall conduct a thorough study of all matters relating to the administration of the death penalty to determine whether the administration of the death penalty comports with constitutional principles and requirements of fairness, justice, equality, and due process.
  - (2) Matters studied.—The matters studied by the Commission shall include the following:
    - (A) Racial disparities in capital charging, prosecuting, and sentencing decisions.
    - (B) Disproportionality in capital charging, prosecuting, and sentencing decisions based on geographic location and income status of defendants or any other factor resulting in such disproportionality.
    - (C) Adequacy of representation of capital defendants, including consideration of the American Bar Association "Guidelines for the Appointment and Performance of Counsel in Death Penalty Cases" (adopted February 1989) and American Bar Association policies that are intended to encourage competency of counsel in capital cases (adopted February 1979, February 1988, February 1990, and August 1996).

1	(D) Whether innocent persons have been
2	sentenced to death and the reasons these
3	wrongful convictions have occurred.
4	(E) Whether the Federal Government
5	should seek the death penalty in a State with
6	no death penalty.
7	(F) Whether courts are adequately exer-
8	cising independent judgment on the merits of
9	constitutional claims in State post-conviction
10	and Federal habeas corpus proceedings.
11	(G) Whether persons who were under the
12	age of 18 at the time of their offenses should
13	be sentenced to death after conviction of death-
14	eligible offenses.
15	(H) Procedures to ensure that persons sen-
16	tenced to death have access to forensic evidence
17	and modern testing of forensic evidence, includ-
18	ing DNA testing, when modern testing could
19	result in new evidence of innocence.
20	(I) Any other law or procedure to ensure
21	that death penalty cases are administered fairly
22	and impartially, in accordance with the Con-
23	stitution.
24	(b) Guidelines and Procedures.—

1	(1) In general.—Based on the study con-
2	ducted under subsection (a), the Commission shall
3	establish guidelines and procedures for the adminis-
4	tration of the death penalty consistent with para-
5	graph (2).
6	(2) Intent of guidelines and proce-
7	DURES.—The guidelines and procedures required by
8	this subsection shall—
9	(A) ensure that the death penalty cases are
10	administered fairly and impartially, in accord-
11	ance with due process;
12	(B) minimize the risk that innocent per-
13	sons may be executed; and
14	(C) ensure that the death penalty is not
15	administered in a racially discriminatory man-
16	ner.
17	(c) Report.—
18	(1) Preliminary report.—Not later than 1
19	year after the date of enactment of this Act, the
20	Commission shall submit to the President, the Attor-
21	ney General, and the Congress a preliminary report,
22	which shall contain a preliminary statement of find-
23	ings and conclusions.
24	(2) Final Report.—Not later than 2 years
25	after the date of enactment of this Act, the Commis-

- 1 sion shall submit a report to the President, the At-
- 2 torney General, and the Congress which shall con-
- 3 tain a detailed statement of the findings and conclu-
- 4 sions of the Commission, together with the rec-
- 5 ommendations of the Commission for legislation and
- 6 administrative actions that implement the guidelines
- 7 and procedures that the Commission considers ap-
- 8 propriate.

#### 9 SEC. 203. POWERS OF THE COMMISSION.

- 10 (a) Information From Federal and State
- 11 AGENCIES.—
- 12 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may secure
- directly from any Federal or State department or
- agency information that the Commission considers
- 15 necessary to carry out the provisions of this title.
- 16 (2) Furnishing of information.—Upon a
- 17 request of the Chairperson of the Commission, the
- head of any Federal or State department or agency
- shall furnish the information requested by the Chair-
- person to the Commission.
- 21 (b) Postal Services.—The Commission may use
- 22 the United States mails in the same manner and under
- 23 the same conditions as other departments and agencies of
- 24 the Federal Government.

1	(c) Gifts.—The Commission may accept, use, and
2	dispose of gifts or donations of services or property.
3	(d) Hearings.—The Commission or, at the direction
4	of the Commission, any subcommittee or member of the
5	Commission, may, for the purpose of carrying out the pro-
6	visions of this title—
7	(1) hold hearings, sit and act at times and
8	places, take testimony, receive evidence, and admin-
9	ister oaths that the Commission, subcommittee, or
10	member considers advisable; and
11	(2) require, by subpoena or otherwise, the at-
12	tendance and testimony of witnesses and the produc-
13	tion of books, records, correspondence, memoranda,
14	papers, documents, tapes, and materials that the
15	Commission, subcommittee, or member considers ad-
16	visable.
17	(e) Issuance and Enforcement of Sub-
18	POENAS.—
19	(1) Issuance.—Subpoenas issued pursuant to
20	subsection (d)—
21	(A) shall bear the signature of the Chair-
22	person of the Commission; and
23	(B) shall be served by any person or class
24	of persons designated by the Chairperson for
25	that purpose.

## (2) Enforcement.—

- (A) IN GENERAL.—In the case of contumacy or failure to obey a subpoena issued under subsection (d), the district court of the United States for the judicial district in which the subpoenaed person resides, is served, or may be found, may issue an order requiring that person to appear at any designated place to testify or to produce documentary or other evidence.
- (B) Contempt.—Any failure to obey a court order issued under subparagraph (A) may be punished by the court as a contempt.
- (3) Testimony of Persons in Custody.—A court of the United States within the jurisdiction in which testimony of a person held in custody is sought by the Commission or within the jurisdiction of which such person is held in custody, may, upon application by the Attorney General, issue a writ of habeas corpus ad testificandum requiring the custodian to produce such person before the Commission, or before a member of the Commission or a member of the staff of the Commission designated by the Commission for such purpose.
- (f) WITNESS ALLOWANCES AND FEES.—

	40
1	(1) In general.—The provisions of section
2	1821 of title 28, United States Code, shall apply to
3	witnesses requested or subpoenaed to appear at any
4	hearing of the Commission.
5	(2) Travel expenses.—The per diem and
6	mileage allowances for witnesses shall be paid from
7	funds available to pay the expenses of the Commis-
8	sion.
9	SEC. 204. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.
10	(a) Compensation of Members.—Members of the
11	Commission shall serve without compensation for the serve
12	ices of the member to the Commission.
13	(b) Travel Expenses.—The members of the Com-
14	mission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per
15	diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employ-
16	ees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title
17	5, United States Code, while away from their homes or
18	regular places of business in the performance of services
19	for the Commission.
20	(c) Staff.—
21	(1) In General.—The Chairperson of the
22	Commission may, without regard to the civil service

laws and regulations, appoint and terminate an exec-

utive director and such other additional personnel as

23

- 1 may be necessary to enable the Commission to per-2 form the duties of the Commission.
- 3 (2) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.—The employment 4 of an executive director shall be subject to confirma-5 tion by the Commission.
- 6 (3) Compensation.—The Chairperson of the 7 Commission may fix the compensation of the execu-8 tive director and other personnel without regard to 9 the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of 10 chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating 11 to classification of positions and General Schedule 12 pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the execu-13 tive director and other personnel may not exceed the 14 rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule 15 under section 5316 of title 5.
- 16 (d) Detail of Government Employees.—Any 17 Federal Government employee may be detailed to the 18 Commission without reimbursement, and the detail shall 19 be without interruption or loss of civil service status or 20 privilege.
- 21 (e) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMIT-22 TENT SERVICES.—The Chairperson of the Commission 23 may procure temporary and intermittent services under 24 section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates 25 for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent

- 1 of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of
- 2 the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5.
- 3 SEC. 205. TERMINATION OF THE COMMISSION.
- 4 The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the
- 5 date on which the Commission submits its report under
- 6 section 202.
- **7 SEC. 206. FUNDING.**
- 8 (a) In General.—The Commission may expend an
- 9 amount not to exceed \$850,000, as provided by subsection
- 10 (b), to carry out this title.
- 11 (b) AVAILABILITY.—Sums appropriated to the De-
- 12 partment of Justice shall be made available to carry out
- 13 this title.

 $\bigcirc$