

Titus House Newsletter

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059

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The case against capital punishment for child sex abuse

By Josiah and Randall . . . We are writing on behalf of the statewide Pennsylvania Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws to express our deep concern over State Representative Ryan Warner's proposal to allow the death penalty for individuals convicted of child sexual offenses. While protecting children is a cause we all share, this proposal is fraught with ethical, legal, and practical problems that demand our attention.

The problem with capital punishment

First, capital punishment is irreversible, and the criminal legal system is not infallible. Numerous cases have shown that innocent people can and do face wrongful convictions, particularly in highly emotional cases like sexual offenses. A single mistake under such legislation would have catastrophic and irrevocable consequences.

Moreover, harsher penalties can have unintended effects on victims themselves. Studies indicate that extreme punishments, such as the death penalty, may discourage victims who oppose capital punishment from coming forward. This is especially true when the perpetrator is someone they know — as is true with 93% of sexual harm cases. Instead of supporting victims, this policy risks silencing them and compounding their trauma.

Beyond these ethical concerns, Rep. Warner's proposal directly conflicts with established legal precedent. In *Kennedy v. Louisiana* (2008), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty for crimes where the victim does not die is unconstitutional. Attempting to circumvent this binding precedent would embroil Pennsylvania in costly legal battles while offering no real benefit to public safety.

Additionally, the death penalty is a punishment that disproportionately affects marginalized communities. Economic and racial inequities plague its application, ensuring that the wealthy and privileged are better able to escape its consequences while vulnerable populations bear the brunt of this ultimate sanction.

Even law enforcement officials have raised red flags about this proposal. Beaver County District Attorney Nate Bible has warned that imposing the death penalty for child rape might incentivize perpetrators to kill their victims to avoid detection. This tragic consequence would only heighten the danger to children rather than protect them.

A Better Way

PARSOL believes there is a better way. By expanding prevention programs, increasing support for survivors, and ensuring fair sentencing that balances accountability with the possibility of rehabilitation, we can address the root causes of sexual abuse while upholding justice and human dignity.

Protecting children is too important to be undermined by measures that defy constitutional principles, ethical norms, and practical realities. We urge lawmakers to reject this dangerous proposal and to pursue evidence-based reforms that safeguard our communities.



In Prison, a Sex Conviction Is a Target for Assault. Staff Pretends Otherwise. By: Tony Vick

Coming into the Tennessee men's prison system nearly 30 years ago, I assumed that my murder conviction would make me the most hated of my incarcerated peers. I imagined a life of solitude, persecution and ridicule. I did not yet know that prison has a social hierarchy in which one type of conviction is always at the bottom, but it isn't murder.

In the early years of my sentence, incoming prisoners with sex-related convictions would be taken straight to protective custody (PC), i.e. solitary confinement. These days, at least in this prison system, they're housed in general population unless they can provide credible evidence of threats made against them by other prisoners in general population, including names and dates. Of course, many are only able to do so after they've been beaten and raped.

South Central Correctional Facility, the CoreCivic-run private prison where I'm currently incarcerated, receives five or 10 newbies a week. When a gang selects someone with a sex-related conviction, the members essentially own access to that person and whatever they have that's of value. No one outside that gang is permitted to physically or sexually abuse them, unless a favorable deal is cut. "Checking in" to PC voluntarily isn't guaranteed protection either. I've seen gang members check themselves in just to follow someone, and punish them for trying to get away.

Before the era of contraband cell phones, gang-affiliated prisoners used to get their intel on new arrivals from staff. By the time you come off the chain bus, wearing your stiff new state-issue clothing and clutching your bag of property, they'd already know not just whether you were affiliated but also what your conviction was. And if it was a sex-related conviction, they probably knew the names and addresses of your parents, your spouse or your children.

"I can't sleep sound. Every little noise wakes me ... I just wait to get killed."

When Robbie* began his de facto life sentence a decade ago, he stepped off the chain bus shaking. During the year he spent in county jail after being arrested on sex-related charges, he'd been kept isolated in a single-man cell while detainees and staff hissed cat calls and talked about how he better "watch his ass" when it was time to go to the Big House. One officer told him to order plenty of lotion.

His plan was to immediately request PC, and he did. He was denied, on the grounds that he had no proof anyone intended to harm him. That night, two prisoners raped him while a third watched the door. They took every piece of property he owned, from his radio to his shoes to his stamps. He spent the next four years isolated in PC, before being transferred to a different prison. Since he knew he didn't have proof that anyone at the new facility intended to harm him either, he stepped off that chain bus with a different plan. He bought a shank and stabbed the first person who tried to take advantage of him.

"I'd rather die fighting than be isolated and alone the rest of my life," he told Filter.

Mark*, whose conviction is also sex-related, first checked into PC after gang members assaulted him for not paying the "protection fee" they charged. The fee remained unpaid while he was in PC, but he thought he was safe. Until, in the middle of the night, an officer opened his cell door and let in someone who'd come to collect. After the other prisoner was done beating Mark, he told him to have family members send the money or he'd be back to kill him.

"Now I never feel safe," Mark told Filter. "I can't sleep sound. Every little noise wakes me ... I just wait to get killed." He's been in general population for a couple of months without incident, after a family member paid \$500 for him to be left alone. He knows it won't last.

If you're queer and serving time for something else, it's common to carry your sentencing papers with you, in case you need to prove it.

One of the constant moral dilemmas people face in prison is whether to sacrifice our own safety or the safety of our neighbors. Part of me is always relieved that it's not me being victimized.

People convicted on sex-related charges are disproportionately LGBTQ+. Because LGBTQ+ prisoners are at high risk for physical and sexual assault already, if you're perceived as queer and serving time for something else—anything else—it's common practice to carry around your judgment and sentence papers with you, in case you suddenly need to prove to someone why they shouldn't hurt you.

Both Robbie and Mark are heterosexual, but they aren't the first to naturally gravitate toward the unique queer community we've built at South Central, "Be the Change." I'd say about 70 percent of our community members here have a sex-related conviction. There's always more safety in numbers than when you're on your own. As the late, great Will Campbell said, "We are all dirty bastards in need of the same grace."

Sex-related convictions, like any other criminal conviction, are not a shorthand for identifying people as good or bad, but they are used that way. It's prison's scarlet letter. This is especially true if the conviction involved a minor, but often makes no difference. Many legislators are outspoken against long-term solitary confinement or violence in prisons. Yet you won't find them organizing around the fact that people sent to prison for sex-related convictions spend their sentences in PC, or fighting, or being literally bought and sold. Even though everyone knows that it's going to happen.

ACT NOW: The Safe Shelters Act: Unsafe, Unjust, and Cruel

By Sandy Rozek, NARSOL Communications Director & John Dawe, NARSOL Marketing Director

When families face emergencies and are driven from their homes, they need quick and equitable access to emergency facilities. Families should be allowed to stay together during crises. However, a new bill, *The Safe Shelters Act*, proposed by Nancy Mace, a former South Carolina state representative who is now a U.S. congresswoman, seeks to deny this fundamental right to families with a member on a state sex offense registry. "Women and children deserve

safety," she has said in defense of the bill. While protecting vulnerable populations is a goal we all share, this bill fails to achieve that and instead imposes unnecessary harm.

About the *Safe Shelters Act*

Mace's legislation, the *Safe Shelters Act*, states: "Except for the purpose of seeking information on designated shelters, a covered sex offender may not enter or use the services of an undesignated shelter."

Under the proposed bill, "designated shelters," as determined by FEMA,

would likely include federal buildings or prisons deemed suitable for registrants by the General Services Administration. **This bill is cruel and unfairly targets registrants with families**, particularly those with small children. Non-registered spouses depend on their partners for help and support during emergencies, and registered single parents would be made to choose between their children's safety and forced separation. We believe that requiring families to separate during a crisis is contemptible.



The Helmet of Salvation

By Sandy Z.



“Take the Helmet of Salvation.” Ephesian 6:17

So far, we have talked about the belt of truth, which is foundational, the breastplate of righteousness, which protects our heart, and the shoes of peace which allow us to stand firm against the enemy. All those pieces of armor we are to wear continuously. However, the other three pieces of armor are to be taken up as needed. We talked last time about the shield of faith. Today we will discuss the helmet of salvation.

Whatever controls the mind, controls everything else. The enemy wants to get into our minds so that we live life his way and not in the victory that God wants for us. God has given us a piece of armor to protect our mind. It's the helmet of salvation. Many people don't understand salvation. We think of it as only when we first start our journey with the Lord. However, salvation in scripture is used in three ways.

Justification – Freedom from the penalty of sin

Sanctification – Freedom from the power of sin

Glorification – Freedom from the presence of sin

Salvation is an ongoing, not just a one-time thing. The enemy will not have power over you unless he can get to your mind. A helmet is put on your head to stop brain injury. When the brain is injured the rest of the body will not function properly. If you absorb bad information into your mind, you will not function properly, it will impede the soul, and the body will not do what it's supposed to do. In other words, if you think wrong, you're going to be wrong.

To protect our minds, we put on the helmet of salvation. What exactly is the helmet of salvation? It is spelled out in Ephesians 2: 8-10. It says “For by grace you have been saved, through faith, it is a gift from God so that no one should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we might walk in them.”

Salvation is by grace, through faith, unto good works. Colossians 2:6 says, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." So, the same way you got saved is the same way you operate as saved. When you were saved, He deposited everything He needed for you. Any victory, power, joy, or peace you have has already been deposited to you by salvation. That's grace. You access everything you have through faith, not works. When you try to assess grace through works you nullify the grace. Religion tries to get you to access grace through works. God can't love you more than killing Jesus for you so there is no way you can earn His favor. You already have it.

Faith is tapping into the grace. Faith is my positive response to what God has already done. The work we do is to express our faith, not to earn God's grace. Faith is your entry point into God's grace. It's what's already been given. Religion will kill you by making you think you need to work to get the grace that's already provided.

Our problem is we have things backward. We're trying to work for God's favor and manipulate Him to get the grace He's already given us instead of doing good works to show you believe by faith what God has already given you.

The enemy will always be bringing false thoughts to us to keep us from having everything God has for us. Jesus died for our salvation so we would have a heavenly home, but He also lived so we could have peace, joy, and love in our earthly homes. Keep the helmet of salvation on so we can experience both.



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Hebrew 13:3 - Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Remember if you change your address you need to let us know if you want to continue to receive this newsletter



ANSWERING THAT STILL VOICE

By: Trucker Jon

Among the personal belongings that were left over from my old house is a green canvas satchel pack that I didn't remember ever buying and I couldn't remember what it held. I assumed it was some kind of camping gear. For some reason, it followed me to my tiny apartment and I put them in a corner and forgot about it.

So today, I am listening to an opera on YouTube, one that I've never heard before. A little voice said to listen to it. It has been nothing special, but side, I heard a faint buzzing. I thought it was annoying so I turned the opera off. The sound continued and I looked all over my apartment for the soft, still voice buzzing in my ear. I knocked on the neighbors' doors and asked if they knew what it was, they didn't hear it. Thinking I might be going crazy, I started tearing up my stuff looking for it. Sure enough, it was coming from the canvas satchel. Finally, I opened it up and it all rushed back to me.

13 years ago, I bought an expensive fishing pole stand specifically for carp fishing. It had a series of rod holders with electronic bite alarms and after all this time, the batteries are still good, but barely so!

Why didn't I ever use it? Just days after it was delivered, my Mom passed away. Then life took over and I forgot about it. Today, I responded to the voice in the bag and I discovered a special treasure.

How many times have we all thought about a piece of scripture and perhaps written it down, or placed a name on a prayer list, but then, life just happened? Today, I have been feeling empty, mourning the loss of my dad and dealing with the slowness of life, no job, no vehicle, no plans. The voice that called to me today gave me hope. I can't wait for spring to come so I can go fishing and try out my new equipment!!

Perhaps, the quiet, still Voice of our Living God is calling us to seek His treasures. Maybe it's time to listen. Look up that scripture, say that prayer. Enjoy the hope that our Lord holds for us!

Hope you all had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Don & Alice



Circle of Concern has gone ZOOM

Circle of Concern is aimed at breaking down isolation and fear by providing a safe place for registrants and their loved ones to get together, build community, and learn ways to step out and take charge of their lives and overcome the stigma they face. The Circle of Concern is a group of concerned registered citizens, family and friends that meet together on the 3rd Sunday of each month. We are meeting this month on **January 19, 2024** at 3 pm—4 p.m. MST (Mountain Standard Time). We will meet on Zoom. We encourage and try to help each other. It is a safe place to share our strengths and struggles. We hope you will join us. If you are planning to attend call Don at (505) 315-7940.. He will send you the link to join by computer or phone. You can contact him at the number above or email him at donmagicjohnston@gmail.com