



## **END THE DEATH PENALTY WITH SAFE CALIFORNIA INITIATIVE**

### **Volunteers gathering ballot-qualifying signatures**

The League of Women Voters of California believes it's past time that we halt executions. That's why it endorses the SAFE California Initiative, which is presently being circulated to collect the necessary signatures to qualify it for the November 2012 ballot. (SAFE stands for Savings, Accountability & Full Enforcement). If it passes, the initiative will replace the death penalty with permanent imprisonment (life without the possibility of parole), including the conversion of existing death sentences to that alternative.

This endorsement is in accord with the LWVUS position supporting the end of the death penalty. The initiative is functionally equivalent to SB 490, a legislative bill endorsed by the California League.

Besides being ineffective and subject to error, the death penalty is a serious fiscal drain. Replacing it with permanent imprisonment would save the state a significant amount of money, estimated at \$1 billion over five years.

A study released in July 2011, by U.S. Appeals Court Judge Arthur Alarcon and Paula Mitchell, professor at Loyola Law School, found that death penalty cases, including legal costs and additional costs of housing inmates on death row, cost California taxpayers more than \$184 million every year. On average, \$308 million has been spent for each of the thirteen executions that have been carried out since the death penalty was reinstated in California in 1978.

While we waste millions on the death penalty, about half of serious violent crimes (homicides and rapes, at 46% and 56% respectively) go unsolved every year owing to limited law-enforcement resources. The SAFE California Act would use some of the savings from ending the death penalty to create a fund to increase the rate at which the serious crimes of homicide and rape are solved by funding additional law-enforcement capacity and would require that convicted murderers work behind bars and pay restitution into a victims' compensation fund.

The SAFE California Act and the campaign to gather qualifying signatures on its behalf are supported by a coalition of law-enforcement professionals, family members of murder victims, and individuals exonerated of wrongful conviction, as well as religious and civil rights groups. [Sign up for email alerts, make a donation, and find more ways to get involved on the campaign site](#) ([www.safecalifornia.org](http://www.safecalifornia.org)).