

DROP LWOP FACT SHEET

The Life Without Parole (LWOP) sentence is inhumane, unjust, and costly.

LWOP affects thousands of Californians and their communities.

Approximately 5200 people are serving LWOP in California state prisons. About 200 of them are women and transgender people in Central California Women's Facility and California Institution for Women.

LWOP is unjust.

90% of people in California women's prisons serving LWOP were sentenced as "aiders and abettors" and/or under the Felony Murder Rule. This means they were NOT the main actor/perpetrator of the crime and may have been forced to be present when their abuser committed a murder.

The majority of people serving LWOP in California women's prisons are:

- Survivors of abuse (intimate partner violence, child abuse, sexual violence, and trafficking).
- People with no prior convictions.

"The night of the crime, I was grocery shopping with my sister. I didn't know a crime was taking place...or that I would end up being a suspect and charged."

-CeCe

People of color are disproportionately sentenced to LWOP.

LWOP is costly and inhumane.

The increase in LWOP sentences means that California prison populations are aging.

California spends approximately \$138,000 per year on each prisoner over the age of 55 in the women's prisons. People serving LWOP are ineligible for elder parole and compassionate release even if they are elderly or terminally ill.

"LWOP is a living death sentence." - Kelly

While LWOP is promoted as a "humane" alternative, those sentenced to LWOP are sentenced to death by incarceration and not afforded the same legal protections as those sentenced to the death penalty.

As with death penalty sentences, the LWOP sentence deprives hope and discourages rehabilitation. People sentenced to LWOP are barred from the majority of self-help programs.

BUILD HOPE

SUPPORT JUSTICE

LWOP is exploitative.

People with LWOP sentences are only eligible for jobs that pay the lowest hourly amount, currently \$0.08/hour, yet they are still required to pay restitution.

Those sentenced to LWOP have little recourse.

Prior to 1993, the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) was required to review people serving LWOP after 30 years in prison. In 1993, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) removed the BPH hearing requirement without required notification.

Beyond post-conviction appeals, the only opportunity for release is if the governor grants a commutation. Until 2016, only one person with an LWOP sentence had been granted commutation. This has started to change. Through the end of his term in 2018, Governor Jerry Brown commuted an unprecedented 283 people. People serving LWOP accounted for about half of that total. Of those serving LWOP whose sentences were commuted, 30 were women.

“[My husband] nearly killed me too many times to count...The judge felt that anything dealing with [his] abuse had nothing to do with the trial. They just never hear about the domestic violence.”
-Laura

The recidivism rate for lifers is 0.5%, the lowest among people who are paroled. There is every reason to expect the same success from people whose LWOP sentence is commuted.

California has begun to recognize the injustice of the LWOP sentence.

It changed juvenile LWOP by passing legislation, including Senate Bill 394 in 2017, which entitles anyone who was sentenced to LWOP when under the age of 18 to a parole hearing by their 25th year of incarceration. While this is a start, the majority of the LWOP population is ineligible for this law.

Victims of crimes and their family members are remembered & respected.

People who are serving time for harming people are respectfully living their amends every day.

In 2019, we are calling on Governor Gavin Newsom to continue the unprecedented increase in commutations issued by Governor Brown.

California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB), and over 100 allied organizations are calling on California legislators to DROP LWOP. Email: info@womenprisoners.org | Online at: womenprisoners.org

JOIN US IN THE FIGHT TO DROP LWOP