

CLEMENCY LETTER WRITING PARTY HOW TOOLKIT

WHY ARE WE WRITING TO DEWINE ABOUT CLEMENCY NOW?

It's been more than seven years since someone was executed in Ohio, due to an unofficial moratorium put in place by Governor DeWine. This year, Governor DeWine finishes his last term as governor, leaving the door open for the next governor to resume executions. But Governor DeWine has the power to reduce Ohio's death row and stop impending state sanctioned violence. We must urge him to use his power of capital clemency, which is a form of executive authority exercised by the governor to forgive or mitigate a criminal conviction through a pardon, reprieve, or commutation.

You can take action by writing a handwritten letter to Governor DeWine and by hosting a letter writing party for other people in your community. Handwritten letters are reviewed, and they are often more powerful than emails. It is important that we urge Governor DeWine to use his power to exercise capital clemency and commute the sentences of people on death row. This toolkit will go over the steps for hosting a letter writing party – a simple gathering that can have a big impact and be a lot of fun.



STEPS FOR HOSTING A LETTER WRITING PARTY

1. Set a time to gather with your family, friends, study group, book club, etc. to write letters to Governor DeWine. You can set a new meeting time or set aside time at a meeting or gathering you already attend. (To make it more fun, have snacks and music!)
2. Gather other necessary supplies: pens, paper, envelopes, and stamps. You can pre-address and stamp envelopes or place notecards or a printed sheet of DeWine's address (see below).
3. Share the letter-writing tips and letter sample (both below) with your party goers to help them write simple but meaningful letters to Governor Dewine. You can print or write this link for people to type into their phones: bit.ly/ClemencyLetters
4. Address, stamp, and mail the letters.

Mailing Address

Governor DeWine
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215



TIPS FOR LETTER WRITING

1. Tell Governor DeWine you support the use of capital clemency.
2. Be clear and concise.
3. Share your personal perspective and reasons as to why you want the governor to exercise capital clemency for those on death row.
4. Support your story with facts and statistics.
5. Include suggestions, be supportive and encouraging.
6. Dewine is concerned about the death penalty's impact on prison staff and people on death row sentenced during their youth. Consider adding these talking points in your letter.



SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Governor DeWine,

[Introduce yourself!] I am writing to you today to ask you to exercise capital clemency for those on death row. I live in [Name of city or your district] and [I voted for you (if true)]. You have shown excellent leadership by reprieving executions to not allow any to take place during your governorship. I encourage you to go a step further and exercise the use of capital clemency for those on death row. You have the power to grant clemency in death penalty cases as long as certain conditions are first met. You must act quickly to direct the Parole Board to initiate investigations in order for you to be able to grant broad commutations before leaving office.

I support the use of capital clemency because...[choose one, all or fill in your own]:

- If you do not take action on the cases of people currently on death row, Ohio is scheduled to carry out 30 executions in the months immediately following your departure. If the schedule goes as planned, that will mean that, on average, Ohio will execute someone every 36 days for almost three years.
- If the execution schedule goes as planned Ohio will execute, on average, someone every 36 days for more than two-and-a-half years. Executions impose a severe toll on correctional officers, medical personnel, chaplains, and other state employees under schedules with far less frequency; a pace of this magnitude would be overwhelming for ODRC personnel.
- Young people are also more vulnerable to coercion, poor legal advice, and false confessions. Many age out of criminal behavior entirely. Clemency recognizes growth and maturation over decades of incarceration.
- Modern neuroscience shows that the brain continues developing into the mid-20s, particularly the areas responsible for impulse control and judgment. Roughly one-third of Ohio's death row committed their crimes before age 25. These sentences were imposed without the benefit of this now-settled science.
- More than a third of the people on Ohio's death row were sentenced at a time when life without parole was not available, forcing juries into an artificial choice between death and a sentence that included the possibility of release. Those sentences reflect structural limitations that no longer exist. Clemency corrects outcomes driven by outdated law.

[Include your personal story about why it is so important to you.] For example:

- I have been advocating against the death penalty for x amount of years.
- I have read the stories of murder victim's family and hear their pain.
- I am a social worker who has seen the effects of our criminal justice system on individuals.
- Pro-life and human dignity are important to me because I am very connected to my faith in these ways...

The people currently on Ohio's death row were sentenced under a system that Ohio itself no longer meaningfully uses or trusts. Jurors rarely impose death, prosecutors rarely seek it, and the public increasingly rejects it. Clemency aligns past outcomes with present reality.

Thank you for your leadership,

[Signature]