

1 [Urging Governor Newsom to Commute All Death Sentences in California]

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3 **Resolution urging Governor Gavin Newsom to use his executive powers to commute**
4 **the death sentences for all individuals currently sentenced to death in California.**
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6 WHEREAS, There are currently 565 individuals sentenced to death in California.
7 California has the largest death row in the nation and one of the largest death rows in the
8 world; and

9 WHEREAS, San Francisco County has no individuals sentenced to death and the
10 voters of San Francisco have twice voted to repeal the death penalty in 2012 and 2016; and

11 WHEREAS, The death penalty reflects a legacy of racial discrimination; Sixty-nine
12 percent of the people under a sentence of death in California are people of color, and one-
13 third are Black; and

14 WHEREAS, Death sentences are more likely to be imposed in California when the
15 victims are white than when they are Black or Latino, while the majority of homicides with
16 Black or Latino victims go unsolved; and

17 WHEREAS, The California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation
18 recommended abolishing the death penalty as a step to addressing the legacy of slavery in
19 California; and

20 WHEREAS, Almost half of the people on California's death row are there for crimes
21 they committed as youth under the age of 26, and approximately one in six were under 21
22 years old; and

23 WHEREAS, Recognizing that young people's brains are not fully developed until their
24 mid 20s, California has enacted several reforms to address the diminished culpability of
25

1 youthful offenders and individuals on death row and those serving life without parole are
2 excluded from these policies; and

3 WHEREAS, More than one third of people on death row in California have been
4 diagnosed with a serious mental illness and dozens have been diagnosed with intellectual
5 disabilities; and

6 WHEREAS, A study by the National Academy of Sciences estimates that at least four
7 percent of people sentenced to death in the U.S. are innocent and California has already
8 exonerated eight men from death row due to wrongful conviction, all of them people of color;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, California's death penalty system has cost taxpayers \$5 billion since 1977,
11 Meanwhile funding for vital victims services are being reduced in California due to Congress's
12 drastic cuts to funding for the Victims of Crime Act; and

13 WHEREAS, Two-thirds of the individuals sentenced to death in California have been
14 there for more than 20 years, and dozens of individuals have been on death row for more than
15 40 years with literally decades of delays caused by California's inability to provide lawyers to
16 handle capital appeals; and

17 WHEREAS, The California Democratic Party Platform supports the full repeal of the
18 death penalty and the Party has twice endorsed initiatives to repeal the death penalty; and

19 WHEREAS, Under the California Constitution, the Governor of California has the power
20 to commute death sentences, with the review and concurrence of a majority of the California
21 Supreme Court justices in certain cases; and

22 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Opera will present from September 14 to 28, 2025,
23 Dead Man Walking, an opera commissioned by San Francisco Opera 25 years ago about
24 Sister Helen Prejean's spiritual journey accompanying a man on death row that informed her
25 fight to end the death penalty in the United States; now, therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors for the City and County of San Francisco
2 urges Governor Newsom to act now to commute all death sentences; and, be it

3 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Board is hereby directed to transmit a
4 copy of this Resolution to Governor Gavin Newsom.