Capital Punishment: A Literal Life or Death Decision

Working Thesis: The death penalty should remain and be more harshly enforced in today’s society because of its proven ability to deter more crimes from happening, to signify that harsh crimes result in harsh consequences, and to vindicate the family of the victim.


This article presents that capital punishment is morally justified. Also, it gives several reasons to support the death penalty by addressing opponents’ objections. Further, it argues that if no one commits a murder, no one will have to be executed. In addition, this article presents that capital punishment is more than revenge for the family as its opponents argue; the article defends that it is moral and just. This article is useful because it tries to reach the audience with an emotional appeal that would be helpful to my argument: “Let us work in America to get back the mentality that victim rights are more important than criminal rights.” I can use this angle to support the side of the victims and use emotion to capture my audience to show that a person who commits a murder should not be the one with protective rights. This article looks credible because of its author, Casey Carmical, and its consistency. Carmical is a who writes “Casey’s Critical Thinking” regarding modern political and social issues; however, the statement
at the end of the article makes me question this validity and I do not think this article is a scholarly choice: “Note that this is an argumentative essay and is thus not suitable as a primary source for research papers or other school projects on the topic of the death penalty. In all likelihood I do not have any more credentials than you do. Please see the works cited below for primary sources.” Although this looks great, I will not be using it simply because of this statement.


This article is written by death penalty supporter and former mayor of New York, New York, Edward Koch. It states that the death penalty should remain enforced to show society’s disapproval of horrendous crimes. Also, it describes how the court system is efficient in preventing innocent people from being executed. In addition, it proposes an idea pertaining to what effect the U.S. murder rate would have if we executed more criminals and posted headlines in newspapers about them. This article is a useful source because of the specific examples it uses. For instance, the article sets up one very specific crime where this punishment was appropriate:

Putting aside deterrence, supporters emphasize a second reason for continuing the death penalty: Society needs to show its moral outrage at particularly heinous crimes, such as the one committed in Connecticut in July 2007. That crime involved the brutal raping of a 48-year-old woman and one of her daughters. Both daughters, one 17 years old, and the other 11 years old, were tied to their beds and perished when their house was set on fire.

This brutal example will help me prove to my readers that this punishment is warranted. It expresses that capital punishment is helpful to society, and one could use this article to support the death penalty.
This source is credible because of the political viewpoint and office held by its author and the proven statistics it provides; it is also a recent article and has been reprinted, so it has been used many times in arguments.


This article displays many statistics showing that capital punishment deters crime. It provides data proving that more executions lead to fewer murders. Also, it gives data demonstrating majority support of the death penalty in the U.S., stating, “In Gallup's most recent poll, 67 percent of Americans favor the death penalty for those convicted of murder, while only 28 percent are opposed. From 2000 to the most recent poll in 2006, support for capital punishment consistently runs a 2:1 ratio in favor.” This article is useful because of its statistics and information about capital punishment. I could use this article to prove that the death penalty deters crime which is directly related to my argumentative thesis. This will specifically be helpful because these are proven statistics; I could use the statistics to defend statements I make in my paper about how many states use this penalty and those same states’ low crime rates, especially crimes of murder. This article is credible because it is a testimony given before the senate, and because of its prestigious author, David Muhlhausen. Muhlhausen is an expert in criminal justice programs in the Heritage Foundation's Center for Data Analysis, further proving his prestige and credibility.