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## The Electric Chair as Revenue Enhancer

Based upon strong public support for capital punishment, New York state officials are considering a comprehensive program of initiatives in tourism, health care, education reform, business development and job training inspired by the death penalty.

Just as New York is a global center for culture, finance and the media, there is no reason it should not establish itself as the leading center for executions. In fact, attracting the growing number of people sentenced to die across the country could be the long-overdue stimulus New York needs to trigger economic growth. States not able to afford the high cost of maintaining death rows and gas chambers could contract with New York for pre- and post-execution services.

Just as New Jersey casinos attract visitors, a state-of-the-art death penalty amphitheater at Staten Island's naval port would attract spectators along with family, friends and relatives of those sentenced to die. Staten Islanders eager for live theater even if it's devoted to executions would then have a way to obtain more state funding of the arts.

"Fast-tracking" appeals and hearings for those sentenced to die would assure a steady flow of criminals to be executed. Rather than rely on a single government agency to conduct executions, the death penalty, like other essential public services, could be privatized, and executionees would be given vouchers that would allow them to choose their own mode of execution by stoning, being fed to the lions, the electric chair, injection, gas, or drug overdose.

The death penalty also could provide the rationale for another taxpayer-supported research center at the State University of New York, a new Center for Advanced Technology (CAT) to develop and evaluate emerging technologies of human execution. Such a center would attract start-up companies trying to design energy-saving electric chairs, pollution-free gas chambers, a "touch screen" to send digital volts via the Internet. The CAT, to be located in one of the many vacant Grumman facilities on Long Island, would also offer embalming workshops to welfare recipients required to participate in a job-training program.

Rather than rely on executioners from Sing Sing, a special state lottery could be created in which citizens would pay for the chance to be picked as executioner of the day. Revenues from the death penalty lottery would be earmarked to pay for the orphanages needed to house the children whose parents are executed by the state.

To overcome New York's liberal image elsewhere in the nation, a "death penalty channel" could

be created, with all executions transmitted live by satellite to a "pay-per-view" audience. It'll make Court TV seem as tame as "Captain Kangaroo," and revenues from pay TV could conceivably mean the end of taxation in this state.

Naturally, state legislators would host a live call-in program to debate whether the right person was actually being executed for the crime for which he or she was sentenced to die. Where possible, Supreme Court justices who had turned down the appeals of innocent people sentenced to death would be invited to attend the execution and then share their ethical insights.

To ensure that the death penalty is humanely implemented, new procedures would be prepared for prison personnel. And an age-appropriate public school curriculum would be developed by specialists at the State Education Department. With the new death penalty curriculum, educators could safely abandon the multicultural syllabus adopted by the State Board of Regents. Moreover, teenage criminals still in school would learn about the ultimate penalty before they're sentenced to it.

With Mario Cuomo on the sidelines, it's official: The "Decade of the Child" is giving way to the "Decade of the Death Penalty."

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