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Priest Thinks Kentucky Could Be Next Southern State to Abolish Death Penalty

By [ALLISON CRAWFORD](#) (/PEOPLE/ALLISON-CRAWFORD)

Priest and abolitionist Father Patrick Delahanty says he thinks Kentucky could be the next southern state to abolish the death penalty. Delahanty says he's been working to abolish the death penalty in Kentucky for about 28 years and thinks the state is between 2 and 5 years from doing so.



(<http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wkms/files/201402/lethal-injection-istock-350w.jpg>)

Credit istock photo

According to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) (<http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=2079>), Kentucky

accounts for only 3 of 1,108 southern executions since 1977, second only to West Virginia with none because it abolished the death penalty in 1965. Delahanty says he is encouraged by the balanced discussion of the death penalty at August's Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary meeting. He says achieving his goal depends on educating people about capital punishment and gaining more supportive voices in the legislature.

"It's going to take both parties and it's going to take people who see it as not a political issue but a justice issue," said Delahanty. "And there are members of both parties who see that. So that's another factor that's helping in Kentucky."

Delahanty says he doesn't see any other southern state discussions of the death penalty progressing as quickly as in Kentucky. Maryland is the only other southern state without capital punishment, abolishing it just last year.

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