

OUR VIEW

Even among death penalty states, Texas stands out

SINCE the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976, Texas has exercised the law with singular gusto. Its 572 executions account for more than one-third of the nation's total.

Aside from executing the most prisoners, Texas does it with the least regard for human dignity, compassion, and constitutional standards.

When the U.S. Supreme Court banned the execution of prisoners with mental disabilities in 2002, Texas responded by killing two death row prisoners — Marvin Wilson and Robert Ladd — with IQ's below 70.

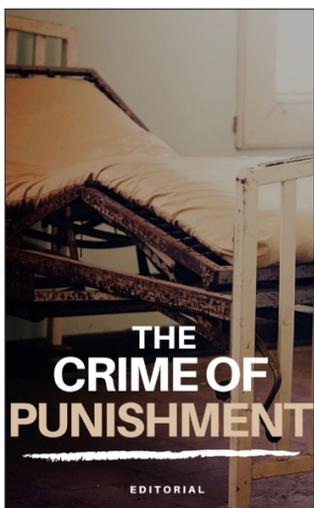
Now, another clash between Texas and the U.S. Constitution shows, again, how Texas stands alone, even among death penalty states.

On Sept. 8, the U.S. Supreme Court blocked the execution of John Henry Ramirez, 37, after Texas refused to allow a pastor to lay hands on Ramirez and pray during the lethal injection.

Justices will hear arguments Nov. 1, on whether Texas violated Ramirez's First Amendment right to freely exercise his religion.

The pending U.S. Supreme Court decision could delay most, or all, of the five Texas executions scheduled for the rest of the year.

Texas prison officials argue that a pastor touching the dying prisoner while praying would be disruptive and a secu-



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rity risk. Disruptive to whom or what? The security argument is equally ludicrous, assuming an unarmed pastor, thoroughly vetted by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, would threaten a secure prison with a platoon of corrections officers.

In truth, the demands for security and order by the Texas prison system are insatiable. Two years ago, Texas banned clergy outright from the execution chamber. Under fire, the state reversed that controversial decision this year.

Ramirez was convicted of murdering a Corpus Christi convenience store worker in 2004, during a drug-related robbery that yielded \$1.25. He elicits little public sympathy. This case, however, isn't about Ramirez. It's about safeguarding constitutional rights



Death penalty protestors continue a vigil outside the prison walls in 2014 before the scheduled execution of Mexican national Edgar Tamayo. Tamayo, convicted of killing a Houston police officer, was executed Jan. 22, 2014.

Pat Sullivan

for everyone, and the government's duty to act in a minimally civilized manner.

Despite the reprieve, Ramirez will eventually die on a gurney in the death chamber, after a lethal load of pentobarbital courses through his veins.

Nor would a more dignified death for Ramirez erase the myriad of practical problems with capital punishment: exorbitant legal expenses, unjust racial and geographic disparities, failure

to deter violent crime, and the risks of executing the innocent, to name a few.

Still, allowing him a final prayer or blessing, comforted by the touch of a human hand, as he prepares to meet his maker, is not unreasonable. Texas should permit it, however the Supreme Court rules on the constitutional question.

The actions of Texas prison officials, whether callously indifferent or frightfully cruel,

are governed by an appalling premise: The state need not recognize the humanity of death row prisoners, or even their right to redemption.

Texas may be the nation's most barbaric executioner, but that should relieve none of the other 26 states with death penalty laws, including Pennsylvania. The excesses of the Lone Star State lay bare the perverse logic of capital punishment wherever it exists.

BACK TALK

Hermitage needs something other than Dollar General stores

The following comments were posted to Facebook in response to an article, "Hermitage may try to regulate stores through building standards," from the Wednesday, Sept. 22 Herald.

■ Quit shopping there and they will quit building more. — Joe Hougelman

■ Hermitage. The city where there's at least 2 of everything — Mark Joseph Davis

■ Doesn't make sense to have so many. It didn't make sense to tear down Arby's all to build it next door either. Could've just put Rita's there and saved.. instead Hermitage decides to waste money right and left on stores and fast food places that we don't need anymore of. How about an indoor skatepark, trampoline park, or just something exciting for kids and family's to get involved. It gets old shopping at dollar general, the way they pop up everywhere you'd think it was a hobby — Tyler Hassan

■ Tyler Hassan someone had to say it thank you .. make people wanna come to the area . like the skating ring people come from all over to go there because most don't have one — Angelique T Austin

■ Tyler Hassan the issue is, the corporations such as Arby's and Rita's and even dollar general are the only ones that have to pay for the building of stores, it infect does not cost the city anything for these stores to build in hermitage. If anything they are pumping revenue back to the city through permits, taxes, utilities, and foot traffic.

While hermitage does need to step up and worry more about improving community life rather than say a round about. — Corey Alexander Runyan

■ Tyler Hassan I disagree about Arby's the old store building had some serious issues. — Debra Fleming

■ Tyler Hassan so I worked at that Arby's, the old building and then for a time at the new one. The store was so busy that they didn't want to lose out on the revenue while building a new one and unlike the other fast food locations, they only want one in

the area. It actually made good sense to me, let all of us keep working while they build a new location — Domenic Chambers

■ Also it was store number 12, it went in back when Arby's was considered a small business — Domenic Chambers

■ Tyler Hassan nice a skatepark and trampoline park does sound good. why don't you go ahead and pop your pockets open and build it people might come — Steve Herald

■ Mercer County Needs A Cabela's, Not More DGs — Phil Harig

■ Stuff to do for families would be great without having to travel to miles boardman or cranberry. — Queen Harley Napier

■ All hermitage does is bring in more of the same businesses. Multiple car washes, multiple McDonald's, taco bell's, etc. The residents of the Valley sure would like some new options to shop and eat, not have several choices of the exact same crap. — Benny Love

■ Seriously...pay the employees more at the ones we already have if that what it takes so they they have more pride in their stores and clean them up. The one in Hubbard is amazing, so neat and organized. Not sure why all the others seem so unorganized. Just a thought. — Paula Luca

■ I love Dollar General as much as the next girl, but enough is enough. I also understand it's not just about what we want. Businesses have to want to come to Hermitage. The problem is if we keep loading it up with dollar stores, these other businesses will not see the area making a profit for them. — Jennifer Schall-Schlegel

■ Jennifer Schall-Schlegel well said — Chris Spradlin

■ I hope so because one of the large signs of an economy going to pot is how many dollar stores you have! — Kim Gardner

■ Time for new commissioners — Janette Karen

■ Building a New Store when Nobody wants to work in the ones already built , That makes ALOT of Sense



The Dollar General store on North Hermitage Road in Hermitage.

Herald file

NOT! — Sue Taggart

■ Sue Taggart I bet you're a Democrat! — Jeffrey Steen

■ Jeffrey Steen No they would be the ones building the same store for the fourth time in the same town when they can not even keep the others open full scheduled hours due to lack of workers... — Tricia Worthington Detky

■ Tricia Worthington Detky I don't know. Dollar General is always open when I go there don't matter which one I stopped at and I frequent many. Maybe they changed their hours just so you would have something to whine about. And how do you know that that?... — Jeffrey Steen

■ There is already a dollar general down the road about 1 mile in West Middlesex — Paula Begeot

■ This is ridiculous — Jamie Felix

■ How About A Bass Pro Store?? They're Awesome!!! — Susan Holmes

■ I spoke at the Commissioners Meeting. All 5 commissioners refused to limit Dollar General despite studies showing how they reduce revenue for local businesses and decrease the number of jobs since they put local entrepreneurs out of business. They essentially paved the way to allow as many Dollar Generals as they company wants. — Brian Skibo

■ Brian Skibo So what are you doing to provide a different option. You're sure sounding like you got the money to put some people to work. — Steve

Herald

■ How about more restaurants — Dig Garrett

■ They must've looked at the 12 or so around New Castle and said messed up — Brian Smith

■ Some nice kids and family activity centers and something that brings some money in. Let's get new and exciting shopping and maybe residents will stop taking money elsewhere — Tracy Fleet Semmer

■ Tracy Fleet Semmer build it and people might come. — Steve Herald

■ They are all over the place down here, some within just a few miles of each other! — Danny Torchia

■ We were just talking about that Dollar General business, ridiculous! — Janice Davis

■ Need a Trader Joe's or Target. Let's snaz it up Hermitage. Dollar General doesn't do it. Seems Hermitage is on a wrong path — George Brooks

■ yes !!! Great idea!!! — Amy McClintock-Hilliard

■ George Brooks Great idea maybe you could put the money up hoping it will succeed. — Steve Herald

■ George, that would be wonderful. Even a decent restaurant. — Gayle Blose-mahaffey

■ George Brooks Unfortunately, Shenango Valley demographics, and disposable income, to name a couple criteria would not support a Trader Joe's or Target.

I can see a Trader Joe's going into a Niles, OH area..... — Mike Szugye Sr.

Mike Szugye Sr. you are ab-

solutely correct. It would be the same for a Cabela's, Bass Pro Shop, etc. The demographics do no support some of the retail/commercial things people want in that community. — Regina Lackner Ehrhart

■ Regina Lackner Ehrhart I read recently that City of Hermitage is considering limiting the number of "dollar stores" built.

Directly related to the level of disposable income — Mike Szugye Sr.

■ Wouldn't the market limit that... If it can not support the store .. the store will close... — Matt Kemp

■ The Dollar General's can't even staff the ones that are here. I've gone several times to the one near me, just to find a note on the door stating sorry we are closed due to no staff. — Karla Dunham

■ Monopolies.....and they pay NOTHING for short staffed stores that are generally dirty . I suggest looking deeper into dollar generals business practices. You may be shocked. — Karen Kallister

■ Ya why are they building so many? We dont need 4 we need at most two that just a wast. You need new businesses not crappy ones — April Sue

■ April Sue Sara Hermitage used be at one time Hermitage had Macy's, Sears, American Eagle, Aeropostale, Rue 21 and some others in mall there now all they are getting is dollar general as same with many other areas. — Matt Houk