

Suggested Questions on the Death Penalty for District Attorney Candidates

- 1) We all know death penalty trials use many more resources than other homicide trials. Please compare the staff time and resources used by the District Attorney's office on death penalty cases and non-death penalty homicide cases.
- 2) In times of tight fiscal budgets, will you be willing to cut resources devoted to death penalty cases and direct them to other areas of the District Attorney's Office, such as investigation of unsolved homicide cases?
- 3) The California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice concluded that California remains at risk of convicting and executing an innocent person. What would you do as District Attorney to minimize this risk?
- 4) Some family members of murder victims say that death penalty cases cause them more pain, dragging them through decades of appeals that repeatedly bring back terrible memories. How would you respond to a victims' family member who is opposed to seeking the death penalty?
- 5) A statewide study demonstrated racial disparities in death sentences in California based on the race of the victim. What procedures would you use to ensure that neither conscious nor unconscious racial bias impacts death sentencing?
- 6) The California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice recommended that District Attorney Offices have written and publicly available policies detailing when the office will seek the death penalty. Would you follow this recommendation?
- 7) What is your assessment of the effectiveness of the death penalty? Do you think this is a useful criminal justice tool? Why or why not?
- 8) Would you support or oppose changing the law to replace the death penalty with permanent imprisonment?
- 9) In some homicide cases, it can take two to three years for the District Attorney's Office to decide whether it will seek the death penalty. In the meantime, the defense must prepare for a death penalty trial, resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal and expert fees in cases where the District Attorney later decides not to seek death. Would you be willing to take steps to reduce the number of potential death penalty cases at an earlier stage in the process?