



TEXAS Death Penalty CO\$T\$

THE AVERAGE COST OF A TEXAS DEATH PENALTY CASE IS \$2.3 MILLION
VS. \$750,000 FOR LIFE IN PRISON. – DALLAS MORNING NEWS, 1992

GRAY/LUBBOCK COUNTY (2009)

Levi King was spared a death sentence in Lubbock County by one vote on October 8, 2009. He pled guilty to the murders of three family members in Gray County in 2005 and was already serving two consecutive life sentences in Missouri for murder. The trial had moved from Gray to Lubbock County due to pre-trial publicity. The jury foreman reported one juror could not definitively say there was no evidence to warrant sparing King's life. There were multiple jurors that struggled in weighing the mitigating circumstances presented by the defense. It took two months to pick the jury for King's case. Preliminary defense costs amounted to \$750,000 (a tenth of Gray County's fiscal budget). This cost was just for the punishment phase of the trial and did not include attorney's fees or a potential bill from Lubbock County, where the trial took place. The District Attorney's Office spent \$88,000 to prosecute King. The cost of pursuing life without parole for King could have been achieved for \$10,000 if prosecutors had not tried King in Texas, according to Joe Marr Wilson, one representing attorney for King.
- *The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, October 20, 2009*

EL PASO COUNTY (2008)

Alone, the resentencing trial of David Renteria cost El Paso County taxpayers \$235,254. It included the cost of juror lodging and meals, overtime pay for court staff, the fee for investigators, and witness travel.
- *El Paso Times, June 23, 2008*

- ① In Texas, each county pays for its own trials and the state appeals process. Often, smaller or poorer counties cannot afford to seek the death penalty. – *Equal Justice USA*
- ② As of today, 136 of Texas' 254 counties have never sent a single offender to death row. – *Death Penalty Information Center*
- ③ States with the fewest protections and a faster process face exorbitant death penalty costs. In Texas, for example, the death penalty still costs an average of three times more than 40 years in prison at maximum security. – *Dallas Morning News*

SHELBY COUNTY (2008)

In 2008, the Shelby County (population 30,000) District Attorney had to decide whether to seek the death penalty for a defendant who was accused of three separate murders, of which he had already confessed to two. The DA told the local newspaper that the defendant deserved the death penalty but she ultimately agreed to a life sentence plea bargain because of the "limited resources for a death penalty prosecution."
- *The Daily Sentinel, April 3, 2008*

JASPER COUNTY (1998)

Around \$1.5 million was spent in the trials of three white men indicted in the 1998 hate crime death of James Byrd, Jr. Despite the U.S. Department of Justice's financial assistance of \$100,000, the county commissioners still had to raise taxes to cover the costs. This resulted in a property tax increase of roughly 7% for two years. One defendant received a life sentence and the other two received the death penalty.
- *MyStatesman, July 11, 2015*

"[T]he fact that new death sentences were at an all-time low in Texas this year is reason to applaud... Texas' declines mirror numbers across the nation. According to the Death Penalty Information Center's year-end report, death sentences dropped 33 percent from 2014, with 49 people being sentenced to death this year. Just six states carried out executions, the fewest since 1998... Confidence in the system's integrity is waning. It should only follow that support for the death penalty follows suit."

- *Dallas Morning News*



Texas District Attorney, James Farren, of Randall County said his office has spent, "conservatively...at least \$400,000" on the prosecution of one individual, Brittany Holberg, who has been on death row since 1998. Farren said the costs are too high for taxpayers and "I do not want to subject them to this kind of thing any longer."

- *Death Penalty Information Center*