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The Deterrent Effect of Capital Punishment

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Oral Presentation O1.4

THE DETERRENT EFFECT OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

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Since the reintroduction of capital punishment in 1976 1,242 people have been executed in the United States. One of the main reasons commonly given in support of capital punishment is that its usage serves to deter other potential criminals from committing homicides. However, there is no scholarly consensus on whether or not such a deterrent effect does in fact exist. This project examines this by building on the work of Dezhbakhsh and Shepherd (2003) and using a panel set of data for all fifty states from 2000 to 2009. If no deterrent effect exists, as the results of this project suggest, it seems prudent to abolish the practice and move instead to a system in which life imprisonment is the maximum punishment one can receive.