

Arguing continues over Nevada death penalty moratorium

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) - Advocates of a death penalty moratorium said Friday that they're encouraged by Gov. Kenny Guinn's tentative endorsement of the plan.

The GOP governor, a death penalty supporter, said he'd probably sign the moratorium, SB254 - if it's amended to delete a provision continuing executions of any inmates who choose not to appeal their sentences.

Under SB254, a Senate-approved measure now in the Assembly, the moratorium would halt executions while the state conducts its first major study of capital punishment since the death penalty was reinstated here more than 20 years ago. But "volunteers" could still die.

The issue has sharply divided lawmakers, with some saying the executions of the "volunteers" - eight of Nevada's nine executions since 1979 - amounts to state-assisted suicide. But others say the condemned inmates who want to die should get their wish.

Assembly Judiciary Chairman Bernie Anderson, D-Sparks, said he agrees with Guinn's position - but "it's a real difficult call" on whether SB254 would survive if it's amended to have a flat moratorium pending the study.

If Anderson's committee revises the bill, it still has to go to the Assembly Elections and Procedures Committee. That panel's chairwoman, Chris Giunchigliani, D-Las Vegas, said she hopes for approval there, "but it won't be as easy as some might think."

Once proponents of SB254 can get it revised in the Assembly, it must move to the Senate for acceptance of the Assembly changes. That presents yet another obstacle because of opposition from Senate Majority Leader Bill Raggio, R-Reno, and others.

But Senate Judiciary Chairman Mark James, R-Las Vegas, said the moratorium and study can win final approval and go to the governor if he can muster 11 votes - a bare majority.

"Once it's back here, I'll work to get the votes," James added.

Senate Minority Leader Dina Titus, D-Las Vegas, said she's uncertain about the bill's future, but added that Guinn's stand should help it. Other proponents expressed similar views. Asked about the provision to have a two-year moratorium but still allow executions of inmates who don't want further appeals, Guinn said in an interview Thursday, "I would be inclined not to approve it if that's left in it."

Asked about a flat moratorium covering all condemned inmates while the study is being done, Guinn said, "I'd probably sign that. I would be inclined to sign it that way, but not as it is now."

The death penalty discussion follows the April 21 execution of Sebastian Bridges, sentenced to die for killing his estranged wife's lover in the desert outside Las Vegas. Bridges adamantly refused to file available appeals even though he contended his conviction was improper.

The moratorium was proposed by James, who said it's needed until a comprehensive study can explore such issues as the cost of carrying out a death penalty compared with a no-parole life sentence in prison, DNA testing, effectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent, and socio-economic and racial bias in capital cases.

Demonstrators protest N.J. police killing

IRVINGTON, N.J. (AP) — About 200 demonstrators staged a peaceful rally Saturday to protest the killing of an unarmed black motorist by a white police officer.

Demonstrators marched through city streets, with police escort, to the steps of police headquarters, where the Rev. Al Sharpton led the crowd in chants of "No justice, no peace."

"They must understand that when you shoot one of us, you shoot all of us. We are not anti-police; we are anti-police brutality," the New York City activist said.

Authorities said Officer William Mildon fired his weapon at Bilal Colbert on Monday after Colbert, 29, refused to get out of his car and shifted into reverse, striking the officer's leg with his car door.

A grand jury will review the shooting in the community on the west side of Newark.

Police had issued a warrant for Colbert's arrest after a similar incident on April 14, when Officer Clinton Franks stopped Colbert for a traffic violation. Franks was bumped by a car door, but was not seriously hurt, authorities said.

Mildon fatally shot another black motorist four years ago. Police said Keion Williams, 24, tried to flee a traffic stop and dragged Mildon, breaking the officer's leg. A grand jury decided not to indict Mildon in the May 9, 1997, shooting.

The Rev. William Rutherford, who earlier in the week had called Officer William Mildon a racist murderer, said the community should stay calm while authorities investigate Monday's shooting. He also called for Mildon's suspension without pay.

Mildon's lawyer filed a libel and slander suit against Rutherford on Friday, but the clergyman said he stood by his comments.

Mildon has an unlisted home telephone number and could not be reached for com-



Demonstrators are given a police escort Saturday, in Irvington, N.J., as they protest the killing of an unarmed black motorist by a white police officer earlier in the week. Authorities have said Officer William Mildon fired his weapon at Bilal Colbert after the 29-year-old refused to get out of his parked car and jammed it into reverse, causing the car door to strike the officer in the leg.

ment Saturday. There was no immediate response to calls to the police department.

Among the people at Saturday's rally was Colbert's brother, Willie Humbert. He noted that Colbert was driving his girlfriend's daughters to school when he was shot. One

girl was in the car at the time, while another had gone into a store to get snacks, police said.

"Something should have been done then, and for damn sure something needs to be done now," Humbert said. "They killed him right in front of his kids."

On Friday, a mediator and a community relations director from the U.S. Justice Department met with Mayor Sara Bost and other local officials. "We asked them to come here to help us through this so there won't be an escalation in the community," Bost said.

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Victory

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Wilson. "Teach the kids not to do this, not to do that," added 15-year-old Ronald "Romeo" Lindsey.

"We want to create hope for the youth," said Hiroko Watanabe, a university student and member of SGI-USA. "This is the proper event for that."

"For us it's important to support the youth as they take a stand against violence," said Cynthia K. Luria, director of the Anti-Defamation League and special guest speaker for

the celebration. "It's the kind of community event that shows we care."

SGI was founded in the 1930s and has an international following of 12 million people in 163 countries. A journalist from England was present to film the goings-on at the festival for SKY-TV in Great Britain.

"It truly brings in the international flavor," Dempsey said.

One youth panelist had this to say: "I think there's not a way to eliminate violence - it's just the nature of man."