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Representative Rehwinkel Vasilinda Files Death Penalty Repealer Bill

Tallahassee – Amid growing concerns over the possible execution of wrongfully convicted prisoners and the exorbitant cost to the state, State Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda (D-Tallahassee) has filed House Bill 4051, which would end the death penalty in Florida.

"I'm not in the business of dispensing vengeance. As a state representative, I am in the business of making decisions to help keep Floridians safe from crime while spending taxpayer money prudently. HB 4051 will achieve both goals," said Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda.

Executions are carried out at staggering cost to taxpayers. In its 2000 report, "The High Price of Killing Killers," the *Palm Beach Post* found that Florida spent approximately \$51 million each year to enforce the death penalty.

"It cost at least \$51 million a year and over 30 years to arrive at the day of execution for Manuel Valle, who is scheduled to be put to death by what may be Governor Scott's first signature on a death warrant. With that \$51 million we could put 850 law enforcement officers on Florida's streets, as well as adding more FDLE investigators and equipment to our arsenal against crime," said Representative Rehwinkel Vasilinda.

Life without parole is a sensible alternative to the death penalty. Almost every state in the country now has life in prison without parole. Unlike decades ago, a sentence of life without parole means exactly what it says – convicts locked away in prison until they die. In reality, it is much less expensive to keep a criminal in prison for life without parole than it is for the state to execute them. A sentence of life in prison without parole allows mistakes to be corrected or new evidence to come to light. That would increase faith and fairness in our justice system.

In addition, state sponsored executions have been unjustly applied; innocent people have been killed; and each execution cause rifts in the fabric of our civil society. All of this when we could be turning our attention and spending our time and money toward solving our state's many challenges. The recent protests and national concern over the execution of Troy Davis is emblematic of the lack of trust more and more people are demonstrating in the justice and accuracy of state sponsored executions. That is not good for the respect and dignity for the law.

"One of the underlying questions in the debate about state-sponsored executions is what is the proper role and place of government? The appropriate question for state government is how do we keep people safe from crime in the most cost effective way? When you analyze the numbers, state sponsored execution is not the correct answer," says Rep. Rehwinkel Vasilinda.

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