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November 24, 2009

Governor Steve Beshear
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear Governor Beshear:

We are responsible citizens who believe in the rule of law and the fair administration of justice. We are concerned that a cluster of as many as five Kentucky Death Row cases could “mature” (to use a euphemism) in the very near future, creating the possibility of multiple executions in rapid succession. As a result, we think the implications of this prospect and its impact on our community must be examined and considered, and that we have an obligation to raise our voice on the issue of capital punishment.

We hope to send the death penalty in Kentucky into remission where it comfortably resided for 40 years from 1957 until 1997 when executions were resumed. There have been four executions in the last 53 years and two of the four inmates dropped their appeals and asked to be executed.

We believe it is right, just, and of the utmost importance that as Governor, you maintain the status quo while the death penalty usage in Kentucky is being assessed by an independent blue ribbon panel of experts and not sign any death warrants during this time if requested to do so by the Attorney General.

Sincerely,

Wendell Berry, essayist/novelist/poet
Sena Jeter Naslund, novelist/former Ky Poet Laureate
Mary Ann Taylor-Hall, poet/novelist
Anne Shelby, essayist/storyteller/poet
Crystal Wilkinson, poet/fiction writer
Frank X Walker, poet
Erin Keane, poet/writer
Brett Eugene Ralph, poet
Kathleen Driskell, poet
Cecilia Woloch, poet
Katy Yocom, novelist
Karen McElmurray, novelist/memoirist
Dianne Aprile, essayist
Ron Whitehead, poet/editor/publisher
Bobbi Buchanan, essayist/editor
Lynn Pruett, novelist/essayist
Leatha Kendrick, poet/novelist/screenwriter
Shirley Cochran Walls, journalist/fiction writer
Leslie Smith Townsend, essayist/editor
D. Cameron Lawrence, essayist/novelist/poet
Christopher Helvey, fiction writer/editor

Eric Sutherland, poet
Kimberly Anderson, essayist/editor
Michael Jackman, poet/writer
Wanda Fries, poet
Sarah Gorham, poet/publisher
Nancy Gall-Clayton, playwright
Marianne Worthington, poet
E. Gail Chandler, poet
Mark Brown, poet
Diana McQuady, novelist/essayist
Ellen Birkett Morris, poet/essayist
Aimee Zaring, novelist
G.C. Compton, fiction writer
Mary Popham, novelist/critic
Edward Leroy Burch, poet
Becky Cochran, essayist
Rae Cobbs, poet
Susan Christerson Brown, essayist