

May 1, 2013

Testimony in favor of **SCR6**, *In memoriam: William E. Connor, M.D. 1921-2009*

Chairman Greenlick and members of this committee, I come before you to respectfully support the resolution to honor Dr. Bill Connor. My name is Ron Steiner and I am board chair of Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. I speak on behalf of its more than 2,000 members and over sixty organizations that support our efforts to repeal the Oregon death penalty.

Dr. Connor has been an inspiration to me personally and to our organization. While most of the testimony in support of this resolution might be about his outstanding life and career as a gifted scientist, accomplished researcher, dedicated educator and caring and compassionate physician, I came to testify about two other aspects of this great man's life.

A life-long Quaker, Dr. Connor lived the core tenants of that faith..... peace-seeking and social justice. It was always a bit strange to me that Iowa was one of the 17 states that had abolished their death penalty. Iowa's conservative politics and strict matter-of-fact demeanor is not the center of progressive social movements. Yet when they repealed their death penalty way back in 1965, Dr. Connor was in the center of the effort, advocating for alternatives that were in line with his core beliefs and made more sense as a public policy.

When Dr. Connor came to Oregon in 1975, in spite of a heavy work load at OHSU, he quickly engaged and helped to create the organization that I represent today, OADP. I first met Dr. Connor in 2003 and was immediately struck by his calm and reasoned approach to moving hearts and minds in the direction of peace and justice. Over the next six years in frequent meetings I observed him exhibit extraordinary leadership, share enormous wisdom and encourage patience in moving Oregon forward. He always advocated for alternatives that made more sense from a criminal justice point-of-view and a policy of fiscal responsibility.

Even as the deadly disease that eventually took his life made it difficult to get to downtown Portland to attend meetings, he would invite us into his home on Sherwood Place on the hill near the hospital, to lead in a manner that was inspirational and admired. The twinkle in his eyes never left him. The charming smile that was ever-present graced his face and the wisdom that flowed as he spoke is still imprinted on my memory of him.

When the citizens of Oregon replace the death penalty with better alternatives along the lines of peace and social justice, Dr. Bill Connor's fingerprints and image will be all over the effort. He was a great inspiration in his endeavors in the sciences and in his efforts to promote a better Oregon. We continue to be motivated by his memory and legacy. I urge you to pass SCR6.

Respectfully,

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