American Correctional Association

OPOPOSING LIFE SENTENCES WITHOUT POSSIBILITY OF PAROLE FOR YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS

2014-1

WHEREAS, youthful offenders convicted of serious and/or violent crimes should be held accountable in a way that reflects human rights, values and moral beliefs; and

WHEREAS, the victims and survivors of crimes committed by youths should be protected and provided with supportive services and the restorative justice necessary to promote recovery; and

WHEREAS, it is understood that there are fundamental differences between youths and adults, particularly with regard to cognitive and emotional maturity; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court has established that children are constitutionally different from adults for purposes of sentencing, and;

WHEREAS, youthful offenders have much greater potential for rehabilitation and should be provided every opportunity to heal and rehabilitate; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional to impose an automatic or mandatory sentence of life without parole upon an individual for a crime committed under the age of 18; and now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the American Correctional Association (ACA) opposes the sentencing of offenders under the age of 18 to life without the possibility of parole; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ACA supports sentencing policies that hold youthful offenders accountable in an age-appropriate way, while focusing on rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

This resolution was adopted by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the 147th Congress of Correction in St. Louis, MO on August 22, 2017. It was last reviewed and reaffirmed at the 2020 Winter Conference in San Diego, CA on January 11, 2020.