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State and Local Prosecutors Express Grave Concerns with Attorney General Sessions' Recent Charging and Sentencing Directive

Over 30 Current and Former Elected District Attorneys, Attorneys General and State Attorneys Sign Open Letter Denouncing Federal Return to Past “Tough on Crime” Mandates

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Current and former elected state and local prosecutive leaders from around the nation have signed an open letter expressing “grave concerns” with the recent directive by Attorney General Jeff Sessions requiring federal prosecutors nationwide to charge, pursue, and seek the longest possible sentences, for the “most serious, readily provable offense.” These elected local prosecutors caution that the new AG directive marks an “unnecessary and unfortunate return to past ‘tough on crime’ practices that ... don’t enhance or promote the safety of our communities.”

The bipartisan list of signers come from several states, large cities, and smaller localities. These elected officials represent over 30 million Americans and hail from 17 states plus DC. This diverse and expansive group of elected leaders stressed their commitment to “prioritizing the safety, fair treatment and dignity of all members of our community” and to “undertake innovative approaches that promote public safety and fairness.”

Miriam Krinsky, the Executive Director for Fair and Just Prosecution – a group that works with prosecutive leaders around the nation committed to new thinking – noted that this letter “reflects a trend among a new wave of prosecutors nationwide who are rejecting excessively punitive policies in favor of data-driven and sensible approaches to improve public safety.” Krinsky, who also spent 15 years as a federal prosecutor, added: “The past few decades have amply demonstrated that harsh sentences – especially for low level drug offenders – do not deter crime and instead disproportionately impact people of color and fill our jails with individuals struggling with mental illness, drug addiction or poverty. We need prosecutors such as these who are willing to stand strong in the face of political winds intent on reviving the failed one-size-fits-all “tough on crime” mindset of the 1980s.”

Dan Satterberg, the Prosecuting Attorney for King County, and one of the signators on the letter, similarly opined that “our justice system isn’t suffering from sentences that are too short, but rather from inequities that have resulted in a loss of confidence and trust among communities most impacted by crime.”

Other signators to the letter include **District Attorneys Cy Vance** (Manhattan), **Kim Ogg** (Houston), **Mark Dupree** (Kansas City), **George Gascon** (San Francisco), **Sherry Boston** (Atlanta), and **Beth McCann** (Denver), former **DA Gil Garcetti** (Los Angeles) as well as **Attorneys General Karl Racine** (Washington, D.C.), **Ellen Rosenblum** (Oregon) and **TJ Donovan** (Vermont).

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