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MEDIA CONTACT
Miriam Krinsky
krinskym@krinsky.la
818-416-5218

Over 100 Criminal Justice Leaders Call on the Biden Administration to Establish a Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Prosecution

Fair and Just Prosecution releases new proposal highlighting why a high-level national body is essential to transforming the criminal legal system and how it can build on the innovations and success of a new generation of elected local prosecutors

Today, 107 criminal justice leaders – including a high-level bipartisan group of current and former elected prosecutors, Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, and former Department of Justice officials – sent a [letter](#) to President Joe Biden urging him to establish a Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Prosecution that would build on the work of the reform-minded prosecutor movement, catalyze innovation in the criminal legal system nationwide and chart a path to greater justice and equity in *all* communities. The letter coincided with the release of Fair and Just Prosecution’s new white paper, [“The Case for a Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Prosecution.”](#) which outlines why this effort is urgent at a time of waning trust in the criminal legal system and how this long overdue national support for reforming the criminal justice system through the power and clout of elected prosecutors – a group that in the past has failed to garner national attention or support – can respond to community voices, as well as bipartisan agreement, coalescing around the need to embrace smarter strategies for promoting public safety.

“For too long, prosecutors have used their vast discretion to pursue convictions and extreme sentences as part of a false promise of public safety; a new generation of prosecutors is changing this paradigm and prioritizing equity and justice while also improving the safety and well-being of our communities. It is time for the Biden Administration to propel this movement forward and act to create lasting and sustainable change to the criminal legal system,” said **Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director of Fair and Just Prosecution** and a signatory on the letter. “A Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Prosecution will engage a variety of stakeholders in reimagining prosecution and therefore the entire criminal legal system. There is no time to wait to begin this essential work.”

The FJP white paper recommends that the task force be modeled on President Obama’s Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing and include elected state and local prosecutors, defense and civil rights attorneys, community law enforcement leaders, people with lived experience with the criminal legal system, survivors of crime, researchers, DOJ leaders and other federal experts, and others with a stake in a more fair and just criminal legal system.

In the letter to the President calling for action on this proposal, the signatories emphasize the need for federal leadership to support and expand the reach of the reform-minded prosecutor movement: “Every

day, we fight for fairness and justice in our jurisdictions. We work in our jurisdictions to advance a new vision of justice, one in which all Americans are safe from harm and oppression, and empowered to collectively build a better future. We need allies and support in that fight. And we need national engagement.”

“Communities across the country are demanding – and deserve – a new vision of justice, and local prosecutors have the power to drive this change forward,” said **Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison**, a signatory on the letter. “As an elected leader and prosecutor, I have discretion that I use to make our criminal legal system more just and to improve community safety and wellbeing. We need federal leadership to help make this the standard of prosecution nationwide and to provide incentives and support to hardwire these changes.”

“As a law enforcement leader, I realize that creating a fair and just criminal legal system requires coordinated and collaborative efforts between police departments and prosecutors’ offices, and I am excited at the prospect of federal leaders committing to new pathways and innovation in prosecution,” said **Charlottesville, Va. Police Chief RaShall M. Brackney**, another signatory on the letter. “We must divest from the punitive approaches of the past and invest in the strategies that we know improve public safety. A Task Force on 21st Century Prosecution is an important and necessary step in that process.”

The over 100 criminal justice leaders who joined on to the letter to the President include **Attorneys General Leevin Camacho** (Guam), **Thomas J. Donovan, Jr.** (Vermont), **Keith Ellison** (Minnesota), **Karl Racine** (District of Columbia) and **Kwame Raoul** (Illinois); local elected prosecutors such as **Parisa Dehghani-Tafti** (Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, Va.), **Michael Dougherty** (20th Judicial District, Colo.), **Kim Foxx** (Cook County, Ill.), **Sim Gill** (Salt Lake County, Utah), **Eric Gonzalez** (Kings County, N.Y.), **Rachael Rollins** (Suffolk County, Mass.), **Dan Satterberg** (King County, Wash.), **Mimi Rocah** (Westchester County, N.Y.) and **Cyrus R. Vance** (New York County, N.Y.); and former DOJ officials and U.S. Attorneys such as **Roy Austin, Shay Bilchik, W. Thomas Dillard, Barry Grissom, Robert L. Listenbee, Carter Stewart** and **Joyce Vance**. Law enforcement leaders who signed onto the letter calling for the Task Force’s creation include **Police Chiefs RaShall M. Brackney** (Charlottesville, Va.), **Abdul Pridgen** (Seaside, Calif.) and **Tom Synan** (Newton, Ohio), **Sheriffs Jerry L. Clayton** (Washtenaw County, Mich.) and **Garry McFadden** (Mecklenburg County, N.C.), and former law enforcement heads **Jim Bueerman, Chris Burbank, Ronal Serpas, Darrel Stephens** and **Scott Thomson**, among others.

“The federal government has an enormous impact on the landscape of state and local prosecution and extraordinary convening power to bring stakeholders together to create a vision for reforming prosecution,” said **former U.S. Attorney Joyce Vance**, one of a number of former DOJ Officials who joined onto the letter. “Federal guidance on best practices, technical assistance and incentivized funding can play a key role in determining local criminal justice policies and driving fairness and justice. A Task Force on 21st Century Prosecution would be an excellent place to start.”

Read the letter [here](#), read the white paper [here](#) and see the full list of signatories below.

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Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

List of Signatories

Roy L. Austin

Former Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice Former Deputy Assistant to President Obama for the Office of Urban Affairs, Justice and Opportunity, White House Domestic Policy Council

Branville Bard

Commissioner, Cambridge Police Department, Massachusetts

Diana Becton

District Attorney, Contra Costa County, California

Wesley Bell

Prosecuting Attorney, St. Louis County, Missouri

Buta Biberaj

Commonwealth's Attorney, Loudoun County, Virginia

Shay Bilchik

Former Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

Former Chief Assistant State Attorney, Miami-Dade County, Florida

Sherry Boston

District Attorney, DeKalb County, Georgia

Chesa Boudin

District Attorney, City and County of San Francisco, California

Rashall M. Brackney, Ph.D.

Police Chief, Charlottesville Police Department, Virginia

Joseph Brann

Former Chief, Hayward Police Department, California

Former Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice

Aisha Braveboy

State's Attorney, Prince George's County, Maryland

Jim Bueerman

Former Chief, Redlands Police Department, California

Former President, National Police Foundation

Chris Burbank

Director, Law Enforcement Engagement, Center for Policing Equity

Former Chief, Salt Lake City Police Department, Utah

Mike Butler

Former Chief, Longmont Public Safety Department, Colorado

Leevin Camacho

Attorney General, Guam

John Choi

County Attorney, Ramsey County (St. Paul), Minnesota

Jerry L. Clayton

Sheriff, Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor), Michigan

Dave Clegg

District Attorney, Ulster County, New York

Shameca Collins

District Attorney, 6th Judicial District, Mississippi

Scott Colom

District Attorney, 16th Judicial District, Mississippi

Laura Conover

County Attorney, Pima County (Tucson), Arizona

Brendan Cox

Former Chief, Albany Police Department, New York

John Creuzot

District Attorney, Dallas County, Texas

Satana Deberry

District Attorney, Durham County, North Carolina

Parisa Dehghani-Tafti

Commonwealth's Attorney, Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, Virginia

Brandon del Pozo

Former Chief, Burlington Police Department, Vermont

Steve Descano

Commonwealth's Attorney, Fairfax County, Virginia

W. Thomas Dillard

Former U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Florida

Former U.S. Attorney, Eastern District of Tennessee

John Dixon

Former Chief, Petersburg Police Department, Virginia

Thomas J. Donovan, Jr.
Attorney General, Vermont

Michael Dougherty
District Attorney, 20th Judicial District (Boulder), Colorado

Mark Dupree
District Attorney, Wyandotte County (Kansas City), Kansas

Matt Ellis
District Attorney, Wasco County, Oregon

Keith Ellison
Attorney General, Minnesota

Kimberly M. Foxx
State's Attorney, Cook County (Chicago), Illinois

Gil Garcetti
Former District Attorney, Los Angeles County, California

Kimberly Gardner
Circuit Attorney, City of St. Louis, Missouri

Stan Garnett
Former District Attorney, 20th Judicial District (Boulder), Colorado

José Garza
District Attorney, Travis County (Austin), Texas

George Gascón
District Attorney, Los Angeles County, California
Former District Attorney, City and County of San Francisco, California
Former Chief, San Francisco Police Department, California
Former Chief, Mesa Police Department, Arizona

Sarah F. George
State's Attorney, Chittenden County, Vermont

Sim Gill
District Attorney, Salt Lake County, Utah

Joe Gonzales
District Attorney, Bexar County (San Antonio), Texas

Deborah Gonzalez
District Attorney, Western Judicial Circuit (Athens), Georgia

Eric Gonzalez

Kings County (Brooklyn), New York

Mark Gonzalez

District Attorney, Nueces County (Corpus Christi), Texas

Christian Gossett

District Attorney, Winnebago County, Wisconsin

Barry Grissom

Former U.S. Attorney, District of Kansas

Andrea Harrington

District Attorney, Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Jim Hingeley

Commonwealth's Attorney, Albemarle County, Virginia

John Hummel

District Attorney, Deschutes County, Oregon

Elizabeth K. Humphries

Commonwealth's Attorney, Fredericksburg, Virginia

Natasha Irving

District Attorney, 6th Prosecutorial District, Maine

Shalena Cook Jones

District Attorney, Chatham County (Savannah), Georgia

Melinda Katz

District Attorney, Queens County, New York

Justin F. Kollar

Prosecuting Attorney, County of Kaua'i, Hawaii

Lawrence S. Krasner

District Attorney, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Miriam Aroni Krinsky

Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, Criminal Appellate Chief, and General Crimes Chief, Central District of California

Former Chair, Solicitor General's Criminal Appellate Advisory Group, U.S. Department of Justice

William Lansdowne

Former Chief, San Diego Police Department, California
Former Chief, San Jose Police Department, California
Former Chief, Richmond Police Department, California

Robert L. Listenbee

Former Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

James Manfre

Former Sheriff, Flagler County Sheriff's Office, Florida

Brian S. Mason

District Attorney, 17th Judicial District, Colorado

Beth McCann

District Attorney, 2nd Judicial District (Denver), Colorado

Karen McDonald

Prosecuting Attorney, Oakland County, Michigan

Garry L. McFadden

Sherriff, Mecklenburg County (Charlotte), North Carolina

Ryan Mears

Prosecuting Attorney, Marion County (Indianapolis), Indiana

Spencer Merriweather

District Attorney, Mecklenburg County (Charlotte), North Carolina

Brian Middleton

District Attorney, Fort Bend County, Texas

Stephanie Morales

Commonwealth's Attorney, Portsmouth, Virginia

Marilyn Mosby

State's Attorney, Baltimore City, Maryland

Jody Owens

District Attorney, Hinds County, Mississippi

Alonzo Payne

District Attorney, 12th Judicial District, Colorado

Joseph Platania

Commonwealth's Attorney, City of Charlottesville, Virginia

Bryan Porter

Commonwealth's Attorney, City of Alexandria, Virginia

Abdul Pridgen

Chief, Seaside Police Department, California

Harold F. Pryor

State Attorney, 17th Judicial Circuit (Fort Lauderdale), Florida

Dalia Racine

District Attorney, Douglas County, Georgia

Karl Racine

Attorney General, District of Columbia

Kwame Raoul

Attorney General, State of Illinois

Ira Reiner

Former District Attorney, Los Angeles County, California

Former City Attorney, Los Angeles, California

Mimi Rocah

District Attorney, Westchester County, New York

Rachael Rollins

District Attorney, Suffolk County (Boston), Massachusetts

Jeff Rosen

District Attorney, Santa Clara County, California

Marian Ryan

District Attorney, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Tori Verber Salazar

District Attorney, San Joaquin County, California

Dan Satterberg

Prosecuting Attorney, King County (Seattle), Washington

Eli Savit

Prosecuting Attorney, Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor), Michigan

Mike Schmidt

District Attorney, Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon

Ronal Serpas

Former Superintendent, New Orleans Police Department, Louisiana
Former Chief, Metropolitan Nashville Police Department, Tennessee
Former Chief, Washington State Patrol, Washington

Harry L. Shorstein

Former State Attorney, 4th Judicial Circuit, Florida

Carol Siemon

Prosecuting Attorney, Ingham County (Lansing), Michigan

Norm Stamper

Former Chief, Seattle Police Department, Washington

Darrel Stephens

Former Executive Director, Major City Chiefs Association
Former Chief, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, North Carolina

Carter Stewart

Former U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Ohio

David Sullivan

District Attorney, Northwestern District, Massachusetts

Tom Synan

Police Chief, Newton Police Department, Ohio

Shannon Taylor

Commonwealth's Attorney, Henrico County, Virginia

Scott Thomson

Former Chief, Camden Police Department, New Jersey

Raúl Torrez

District Attorney, Bernalillo County (Albuquerque), New Mexico

Gregory Underwood

Commonwealth's Attorney, City of Norfolk, Virginia

Matthew Van Houten

District Attorney, Tompkins County (Ithaca), New York

Joyce Vance

Former U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Alabama

Cyrus R. Vance

District Attorney, New York County (Manhattan), New York

Andrew Warren

State Attorney, 13th Judicial Circuit (Tampa), Florida

Lynneice Washington

District Attorney, Jefferson County, Bessemer District, Alabama

Jared Williams

District Attorney, Augusta, Georgia

Todd Williams

District Attorney, Buncombe County (Asheville), North Carolina