

Joint Statement From Criminal Justice Leaders on the Impeachment of Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner

We are a bipartisan group of current and former elected prosecutors, attorneys general, and law enforcement leaders; as well as former judges, United States Attorneys, and Department of Justice officials. We join together to condemn the recent vote of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to impeach – and seek to remove from office – Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner. This impeachment constitutes a deeply alarming attempt to disenfranchise voters, a rejection of democratic values, and a potential threat to public safety. We have come together to oppose this impeachment because the core democratic principles at stake here are too important for any of us to ignore, regardless of our political persuasions or views on individual personalities.

As leaders in the criminal legal system, we know that public safety isn't created in police departments, prosecutor's offices, or courtrooms — it's created in and by communities. We cannot make communities safe by fiat; we depend on the wisdom, vision and collaboration of those who are closest to crime, have been personally affected by criminal behavior, and understand (and have seen up close) local drivers of violence. It's essential that we empower communities to set their own vision of safety and justice, including by electing a chief prosecutor who shares their values and goals for their local justice systems. This isn't just the right thing to do and what our democratic process requires; it is also integral to building and fortifying community trust in systems that are the bedrock of public safety.

Last year, after four years of seeing DA Krasner's vision in action during his first term, [nearly 70 percent](#) of Philadelphians voted to re-elect him in both his primary and general elections. Tellingly, the neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence supported him at even higher rates.

The people of Philadelphia understand the violence in their city better than state legislators in Harrisburg and they have been clear: they want smart, data-driven reform policies that work. This week, members of the Pennsylvania legislature – [90 percent](#) of whom are white and many of whom represent areas hundreds of miles away from Philadelphia – told Philadelphians – 60 percent of whom are Black or Latino – that a handful of politicians who neither work nor live in their community know what their city needs better than they do.

In seeking to override the will of voters, Pennsylvania legislators may actually undermine public safety in Philadelphia. The criminal legal system only works if the people it serves believe it to be legitimate; all of us working in the system depend on cooperation from victims, witnesses, people who commit crimes, community organizations, and our broader communities to do our jobs. By telling Philadelphians that their votes do not matter – that politicians in Harrisburg better understand the violence and public safety concerns members of the community experience and live among – the legislature has threatened the legitimacy of the justice system and those who work within it. And this erosion of trust in both law enforcement and the integrity of our democratic process will have potentially profound impacts on efforts to prevent, solve, and respond to serious crime in Philadelphia.

We are also deeply concerned that, in their efforts to oust DA Krasner, supporters of impeachment have deliberately spread misinformation and misrepresented crucial public safety research. The legislators who

led this impeachment ignored the fact that many Pennsylvania counties—including counties represented by several of the impeachment’s strongest proponents—have seen at least comparable, and sometimes [larger](#), increases in homicides than experienced in Philadelphia. Moreover, mounting evidence demonstrates that prosecutorial reforms do not drive crime increases; a recent [study](#) found that homicide rates over the past several years have actually risen less rapidly in jurisdictions with reform-minded prosecutors such as DA Krasner at the helm than in communities led by traditional prosecutors. A 2021 [study](#) similarly found no correlation between the implementation of prosecutorial reform policies and reported crime rates.

Crime rates in this country are much more complex than some Pennsylvania legislators want the public to believe. We have tragically seen crime increases in communities nationwide — urban and rural, across the political spectrum — as we’ve collectively experienced a unique series of events over the past three years: a once-in-a-century global pandemic, back-to-back years of record gun sales, and massive economic upheaval followed by rising inflation. These are serious problems that demand serious, evidence-based solutions, not finger-pointing. The reality is that neither crime increases *nor* decreases can be solely attributed to any lone official or office and prosecutors alone cannot create public safety.

Even while recognizing external forces that necessarily impact crime rates, DA Krasner has used the power of his office to promote efforts aimed at reducing violent crime. He has [fought](#) for grant money to improve law enforcement’s capacity to solve serious crimes and [implemented innovative](#) gun violence prevention programming. He launched a [program](#) that provides intensive support for the families of homicide victims, ensuring that survivors’ immediate needs are met and disrupting the cycle of violence that leads so many survivors of violent crime to become involved in the criminal justice system themselves. And, he has worked to strengthen Philadelphia’s communities by [channeling funds](#) to grassroots organizations, improving trust in the criminal legal system, and ending practices that wasted money and fractured families to unnecessarily incarcerate people who posed no threat to public safety.

As he’s worked to protect his community over the past five years, DA Krasner has continuously asked the Pennsylvania legislature to work alongside him by passing gun control legislation and funding programs and initiatives shown to reduce community violence. Yet some in the legislature have instead chosen to ignore decades of evidence on the drivers of violence in favor of political grandstanding and fearmongering.

Our communities deserve leaders who take these ideas seriously, who follow the evidence on public safety wherever it leads, and who work to support survivors of crime, instead of using them as political props.

To promote public safety, policymakers and law enforcement leaders need to work in partnership with communities to understand drivers of violence and develop ground-up, sustainable solutions. Removing Larry Krasner from office would undermine the rule of law, democracy, and public safety.

We urge the Pennsylvania Senate to protect the fundamental rights of the voters of Philadelphia who have spoken loudly and clearly in their selection of a District Attorney who aligns with their vision of justice and public safety. We need to move away from political attacks and empower our communities — not undermine them — as we work together to promote public safety and well-being.

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