

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...
Recent News Items and Articles of Interest
July 2023

Wesley Bell (St. Louis County, MO)

[Second Police Officer From Missouri Department Charged In Connection With Attack](#)

July 19, 2023 | AP News

St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Wesley Bell announced charges against two on-duty police officers in the kidnapping and assault of a Missouri man. According to the affidavit, the two officers never turned on their body cameras, never informed a dispatcher that a suspect was in custody and did not write a report.

PA Bell: *“There is no excuse for this criminal conduct, and my office will prosecute these officers to the fullest extent of the law.”*

Alvin Bragg (New York County, NY)

[Manhattan D.A. Redistributes \\$6 Million In Seized Financial Crime Money to Harlem-Based Mental Health Investment](#)

July 6, 2023 | Amsterdam News

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg announced that his office would award \$6 million to a local nonprofit organization focused on supporting individuals with mental illness and/or substance use disorders, particularly those who are unhoused. The funding for the award comes from a pool of money seized from major banks during white-collar financial crime prosecutions.

DA Bragg: *“By [addressing] fundamental needs like access to a safe home and mental health care, we can improve public safety in our communities.”*

John Choi (Ramsey County, MN)

[Minnesota Prosecutors Can Soon Seek Resentencing for Prisoners](#)

July 15, 2023 | Star Tribune

Elected prosecutors in Minnesota can now seek the resentencing and release of incarcerated people who have been rehabilitated and can safely return to their communities. Ramsey County Attorney John Choi and Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty explained that this change will allow prosecutors to address extreme sentences that no longer serve the interests of justice, conserve limited resources, and promote equity in their jurisdictions. Minnesota will begin with a pilot project in the Twin Cities area.

CA Choi: *“We should care about people who no longer need to be in prison who don't pose a public safety risk.... If we truly want to be ministers of justice — and we do have some responsibility to ensure the quality of justice in our communities — we have to take on this role.”*

Laura Conover (Pima County, AZ)

[Collaboration, Hard Work Has Reduced Violent Crime](#) (Opinion)

July 30, 2023 | Tuscon.com

Pima County Attorney Laura Conover has been working with local government partners to address the spike in homicides that began in 2020 and persisted through 2022. Among the strategies employed were working groups that brought actors across the criminal legal system

together to analyze crime patterns. The collaborative efforts have effectively reduced homicides, surpassing national and state rates of decline.

CA Conover and Police Chief Chad Kasmer: *“Our achievements reflect our steadfast commitment to ensuring the safety and security of our community through targeted and effective measures against violent crime, while seeking justice for victims.”*

John Creuzot (Dallas County, TX)

[SMU, Child Poverty Action Lab Partner with Dallas County District Attorney To Research Pre-Trial Detention](#)

July 21, 2023 | KRLD

Dallas District Attorney John Creuzot has partnered with Southern Methodist University’s Dedman School of Law and the Child Poverty Action Lab to research the impacts of jail time on families, focusing on the lasting trauma inflicted on children who have an incarcerated parent. The research data collected and analyzed will help DA Creuzot’s office better understand how pre-trial incarceration harms community well-being.

[The Changing Face of Dallas County Exonerations](#)

July 27, 2023 | D Magazine

In 2007, Dallas County became one of the first jurisdictions around the country to establish a conviction integrity unit and prioritize the exoneration of the innocent; since then, 32 people have been exonerated, including six individuals who were cleared during DA Creuzot’s tenure. Evolutions and advancements in research, enhanced technology, and increased staff have made it possible to address past wrongful convictions and to ensure the right people are held responsible moving forward.

Kim Foxx (Cook County, IL)

[Kim Foxx Sees Elimination of Cash Bail As Step Toward Equal Justice](#)

July 19, 2023 | WTTW News

Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx applauded the Illinois Supreme Court’s ruling to uphold a law abolishing the use of cash bail—the first state in the country to do so. The legislation aimed to create a fairer criminal legal system and promote public safety by ensuring that individuals do not languish behind bars for low-level offenses while wealthier individuals can buy their freedom even for the most serious crimes.

SA Foxx: *“[The elimination of cash bail is] a monumental milestone toward achieving equal justice.... I think we’re telling victims that absolutely their safety is paramount and someone’s access to cash shouldn’t determine whether or not they’re going to be at risk of harm.”*

[Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx Releases List Of Cops Who Cannot Testify For Prosecutors In Criminal Trials](#)

July 20, 2023 | Block Club Chicago

SA Foxx announced that her office would release a publicly available “Do Not Call List” of law enforcement officers who, based on misconduct and credibility concerns, will no longer be called to testify as witnesses in any court proceedings. The new policy builds on SA Foxx’s work to reinforce and expand the implementation of her office’s proactive Brady/Giglio policy.

SA Foxx: *“The credibility of our office and the integrity of the work that we do requires that we are as transparent as we can possibly be.”*

José Garza (Travis County, TX)

[City of Austin Leaders Announced the Launch of the “We All Belong, Powered by Austin Against Hate” Education and Outreach Initiative](#)

July 21, 2023 | [AustininTexas.gov](https://austininTexas.gov)

Travis County District Attorney José Garza helped launch We All Belong, a city-wide effort to empower the community to help keep Austin safe and welcoming. The initiative builds on the work DA Garza did as member of the Austin-Travis County Hate Crimes Task Force. The new initiative will develop and publish online tools to report hate crimes and view interactive data on bias-motivated incidents.

Eric Gonzalez (Kings County, NY)

[Can Domestic Violence and Community Violence Be Interrupted at the Same Time?](#)

July 11, 2023 | The Trace

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez worked to reduce the number of domestic violence charges in his office through partnerships with a new program, Heal the Ville, facilitated by We Build The Block and Brownsville In Violence Out. This community-based violence intervention program addresses the link between domestic violence and community violence. For three months, witnesses, victims, and perpetrators gather for conversation circles that teach communication skills and help the participants process their trauma. Credible community mentors and support service providers facilitate these conversations and aim to intercept interpersonal problems that often escalate to community violence.

DA Gonzalez: *“If we care a lot about reducing violent crime in our community, we have to start dealing with family violence and intimate partner violence in the home.”*

Jim Hingeley (Albemarle County, VA)

[Lynching Victim John Henry James Receives ‘One Little Drop Of Justice’ 125 Years After His Death](#)

July 14, 2023 | Charlottesville Tomorrow

Albemarle County Commonwealth’s Attorney Jim Hingeley filed a motion to dismiss the indictment of John Henry James, who was lynched on July 12, 1898, in Albemarle County while on his way to the county Circuit Court after he was wrongfully accused of sexual assault. A grand jury convened to consider the accusation and despite having learned of Mr. James’ death while deliberating, the jurors nonetheless proceeded to issue an indictment against him. CA Hingeley was inspired to address this historic injustice after visiting the Equal Justice Initiative’s National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, in April.

CA Hingeley: *“We’re never going to be able to bring to justice the people who committed the lynching, or to restore John Henry James’ life that was so terribly taken from him. I don’t want to exaggerate and say that we’ve made a big step. But it’s a good step, and an important step. I hope that out of that will grow a sense of commitment and dedication to continuing the work of achieving racial justice here, because we have work to do.”*

Larry Krasner (City and County of Philadelphia, PA)

[A Philly Man Was Cleared of Murder Charges Because of Ties To 2 Disgraced Ex-Homicide Detectives](#)

July 24, 2023 | The Philadelphia Inquirer

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner's conviction integrity unit announced that they had officially exonerated Neftali Velasquez, who was convicted of murder in 2016. Philadelphia police detectives Philip Nordo and James Pitts were involved in the case and have since been charged with official misconduct, including failure to disclose evidence, calling into question the validity of the convictions they helped secure.

Ryan Mears (Marion County, IN)

['They're Helping Out': Prosecutors' Offices Hosting Clinics for Expungements, License Suspensions](#)

July 5, 2023 | The Indiana Lawyer

Marion County District Attorney Ryan Mears led a Second Chance Workshop, bringing legal professionals and volunteers together to help community members address lingering legal issues. Attendees received help with suspended driver's licenses, expungements, and child support payments. The event also included a resource fair, where attendees could connect with community supports, including a violence intervention program, a diaper bank, and job opportunities.

DA Mears: *"One of the biggest challenges we have is building trust in the community and making sure people understand that the prosecutor's office is here to help."*

Steve Mulroy (Shelby County, TN)

[Judge Strikes Down Law Allowing Tennessee Attorney General to Argue Certain Death Penalty Cases](#)

July 17, 2023 | AP Reuters

A court ruled that lawmakers violated the Tennessee Constitution when they passed a law this spring giving the state attorney general more authority to argue certain death penalty cases. Some advocates argued the new law targeted reform-minded district attorneys who had expressed reluctance to seek the death penalty. The court's ruling supported District Attorney Steve Mulroy's argument that the new law hinders the ability to fulfill the duly elected DA's responsibilities under the state Constitution.

Pamela Price (Alameda County, CA)

[Price Speaks in Favor Of Gun-Control Bills](#)

July 3, 2023 | The Independent

Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price testified in the California Senate Public Safety Committee in favor of reforms aimed at gun violence prevention. She supported prohibiting law enforcement from selling surplus guns to the public, reducing the time to relinquish a firearm after a conviction, outlawing the sale of body armor except to qualified individuals, and regulating the sale of "ghost guns."

DA Price: *"There is too much gun violence in our community.... Too often anger, resentment and unresolved mental health challenges meet and cause injuries or death to our community members."*

Eric Rinehart (Lake County, IL)

['Our Communities Will Be Safer': Lake County State's Attorney Praises Court Ruling Ending Cash Bail In Illinois](#)

July 19, 2023 | Lake & McHenry County Scanner

Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart applauded an Illinois Supreme Court decision to uphold the Illinois Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity-Today (SAFE-T) Act, which ended the use of the cash bail system in the state, replacing it with a process that promotes community safety and fairness. SA Rinehart was a strong proponent of these reforms to cash bail. The SAFE-T Act also mandates the use of body-worn cameras for all police departments and the retention of police misconduct records.

SA Rinehart: *"Our jail will no longer hold non-violent offenders simply because they do not have money to post bail. We will finally be addressing how a wealth-based system disproportionately jails Black and Brown defendants. We can finally begin to live up to the ideal that access to money should not lead to different justice systems for different defendants."*

Mike Schmidt (Multnomah County, OR)

[Portland Officer Issues Apology for Hitting Photographer During 2020 Racial Justice Protest](#)

July 12, 2023 | NBC News

Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt pursued a restorative justice process as an alternative to a criminal case after a Portland police officer, Corey Budworth, unnecessarily struck photographer Teri Jacobs over the head with a baton during widespread protests after the killing of George Floyd in August 2020. The charges against Mr. Budworth were dismissed after the conclusion of the restorative justice process in which he apologized to Ms. Jacobs and the greater Portland community for the harm he caused.

DA Schmidt: *"This resolution, through a restorative justice process, is a brave example of what healing can and should look like. If a police officer and a protester can come together in dialogue, understanding, and healing, I believe our city can as well."*

Brian Schwalb (Attorney General, DC)

[DC Attorney General Sues Chemical Firms For PFAS Contamination](#)

July 18, 2023 | Washington Informer

Washington DC Attorney General Brian Schwalb filed a lawsuit against 25 chemical companies, including DuPont and 3M, alleging that the companies knew that the PFAS chemicals in their manufacturing posed hazardous health risks, yet they hid that information and falsely claimed their products were safe. Commonly called "forever chemicals," some PFAS chemicals do not break down and can easily leak into waterways, creating large-scale contamination. In addition to punitive damages, the OAG is seeking to recover costs to investigate, monitor, and treat PFAS in stormwater, drinking water, wastewater, and biosolids.

AG Schwalb: *"The District and its residents will be forced to deal with the adverse impacts of these 'forever chemicals' for years to come. Through this lawsuit, we will hold polluters accountable for the damage their conduct has caused and will continue to cause."*

Jared Williams (Augusta Judicial Circuit, GA)

[DA Jared Williams Promotes Program That Will Keep Kids in Classrooms and Out of Courtrooms](#)

July 28, 2023 | WRDW

Augusta Georgia District Attorney Jared Williams celebrated the first graduates from his Youth Diversion to the Arts (YDTA) program, which engages young people ages 12 to 16 for six weeks during the summer to provide an alternative to traditional prosecution. Participants received support from a therapist, worked on social-emotional and communication skills, and at the conclusion of the program, performed in a musical and created a gallery exhibit.

DA Williams: *“We do a really good job of reactive justice and getting convictions in the courtroom, but if we don’t do the proactive piece then we can never prevent that victim from being victimized [and] we can never prevent the revolving door of criminality.”*

Additional Articles

[Half The Police Force Quit. Crime Dropped.](#) (Opinion)

July 2, 2023 | New York Times

Investigative journalist Radley Balko explored how some police officers across the country are choosing to leave their jobs rather than comply with accountability measures as the country demands an end to racial discrimination, excessive violence, and misconduct among law enforcement. He discusses what we can learn about public safety from a community that saw half its police force quit after a Black police chief was hired, yet nonetheless experienced decreases in crime.

Balko: *“When people don’t trust law enforcement, they stop cooperating and resolve disputes in other ways. Instead of fighting to retain police officers who feel threatened by accountability and perpetuate that distrust, cities might consider just letting them leave.”*

[How To Revitalize Summers for Teens and Young Adults](#) (Opinion)

July 10, 2023 | The Washington Post

The Washington Post Editorial Board praised efforts to reshape summers for young people. Many jurisdictions are using American Rescue Plan funds to provide seed funding for employment programs for teens, which provide both the opportunity to make money and learn marketable skills. Research shows that these programs can help prevent participants from becoming involved with the criminal legal system and improve educational outcomes such as high school graduation rates, while also developing a stronger workforce.

[133 Degrees And No AC: Kids At Angola Prison Kept In Potentially Deadly Heat](#)

July 18, 2023 | The Appeal

As record heat has affected large swaths of the country, there have been troubling reports of individuals incarcerated in dangerous and even deadly temperatures. Children in Louisiana State Penitentiary (or Angola), where temperatures in the area have regularly risen above 100°, are living without consistent air conditioning in the facility. These inhumane conditions compromise the health and well-being of children living in jails and prisons. Advocates urged a federal court to immediately move all kids out and cease transfers into the prison.

Dr. Susi U. Vassallo, a medical expert for the plaintiffs: *“I would not dare to keep my dog in these conditions for fear of my dog dying. It has been dangerously hot in Angola so far this*

summer. Confining children for all or most of the day to concrete and cement buildings without air conditioning is foolhardy and perilous.”

[L.A. County Courts To Severely Limit Use Of Cash Bail](#)

July 18, 2023 | Los Angeles Times

Starting on October 1, Los Angeles County courts will not seek cash bail for defendants accused of misdemeanors or low level felonies. The decision aims to both reduce the number of people housed in L.A. County Jail, which has experienced severe problems with infrastructure, staffing, and safety, and increase equity for California residents, who are no longer held pre-trial solely because of inability to pay bail.

[Paving The Path From Prison To College](#)

July 19, 2023 | Newsweek

As of July, people in federal prisons qualify for Pell Grants, which provide financial assistance for higher education, both while individuals are incarcerated and after returning home. This permanent expansion of Pell Grant recipients was first piloted under the Obama administration when 200 colleges and universities were paired with 9,000 incarcerated or previously incarcerated people. Increased access to education has been shown to significantly reduce recidivation, helping to strengthen public safety and save taxpayer dollars.

[Survey Of 30 U.S. Cities Shows Nearly 10 Percent Drop In Homicides In 2023](#)

July 20, 2023 | New York Times

A report from the Council on Criminal Justice found that in 2023 the U.S. is on track to record one of its most significant annual declines in homicides, based on data from 30 cities. While the causes behind fluctuations in crime rates are complex and more work is needed to return to pre-pandemic crime levels, this is a positive development underscoring the need for more investment in communities and crime prevention.

[Current & Former Criminal Justice Leaders Call on GA Supreme Court to Protect Prosecutorial Discretion And The Will Of Georgia Voters](#)

July 21, 2023 | Davis Vanguard

Nearly 60 current and former elected prosecutors and former U.S. Attorneys and Department of Justice officials filed an [amicus](#) brief in support of Western Judicial Circuit District Attorney Deborah Gonzalez. The brief urged the Georgia Supreme Court to uphold the well-established discretion of district attorneys and called for the dismissal of a case brought by a single unelected individual that could give the judiciary the power to oversee decision-making vested in the elected DA. The signatories argued that allowing the case to proceed would infringe on prosecutorial independence and endanger the ability of voters to have a say in their local criminal legal system, eroding community trust and undermining public safety.

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi: *“The independence of locally elected prosecutors has been well-settled since the founding of our country, and the courts protected their discretion even as some district attorneys pursued overly punitive policies that damaged communities instead of making them safer. Now, when we have reform-minded leaders chosen by the voters to bring about change, the discretion that judges have respected for decades must continue to be safeguarded.”*

[Dallas County Jail Adds Election Day Polling Place After Pressure from Activists](#)

July 23, 2023 | Bolts Magazine

This summer, Dallas County became the second jail in Texas to install a polling location, allowing people staying in the jail to vote in person. Hundreds of thousands of eligible voters incarcerated across the country are unable to cast their ballot in elections, depriving them of their fundamental right to vote. Absentee ballots can be challenging to acquire, especially for those held pre-trial, who may need time to plan to receive a ballot.

Nicole Porter, Senior Director of Advocacy for the Sentencing Project: *“Democracy should be a priority for everybody and access to the ballot should be a priority for anyone who has influence and concern for liberty.”*

[40 Years Ago, The US Started Sending More and More Kids to Prison Without Hope of Release, But Today, It’s Far More Rare – What Happened? \(Opinion\)](#)

July 24, 2023 | The Conversation

Julie Ellen McConnell, legal scholar and Director of the Children’s Defense Clinic, wrote about the landscape of incarcerated youth in the U.S. Although the use of juvenile life without parole (JLWOP) has declined markedly over the last 20 years, more than 500 people are still serving sentences for charges they received as children. McConnell examines the trajectory of harsh sentencing laws for children, what advocates are doing to end the use of JLWOP nationwide, and why we need to invest in prevention and rehabilitation over extreme punishments.

Julie Ellen McConnell: *“[I] believe it is important to recognize that a 14-year-old child’s brain is far from fully developed, and that retribution and accountability must take that into account – ideas that guide my work today as a legal scholar who defends youth [charged with criminal offenses].”*

[California’s Free Prison Calls Are Repairing Estranged Relationships And Aiding Rehabilitation](#)

July 27, 2023 | Los Angeles Times

California became the second state to mandate free phone calls in state prisons, which previously cost as much as \$6 for 15 minutes. This mandate could help promote effective rehabilitation and later return to the community for incarcerated individuals by enabling them to maintain relationships with loved ones outside of prison, thereby strengthening their connections and support systems. The reform seeks to reduce recidivism and enable a smoother reentry for those exiting California prisons.

[Connecticut Has Done Something Remarkable With Crime](#)

July 27, 2023 | Slate

Since 1999, Connecticut has overhauled its criminal legal system and reduced the incarcerated population by 50%, allowing the state to close 10 prisons while experiencing the lowest crime rate in more than 40 years. In the last decade, the state legislature has repealed the death penalty, increased the age juveniles could be charged as adults from 16 to 18, and eliminated several other sentencing guidelines. And prisons are providing more rehabilitation opportunities, including implementing life skills courses and mentorship programs, which have helped to reduce recidivism.

[We Know What Happens When We Prosecute Drug Dealers as Murderers](#) (Opinion)

July 28, 2023 | New York Times

As overdose deaths in the U.S. continue to increase, some lawmakers are turning to harsh drug policies, such as drug-induced homicide statutes and extreme mandatory sentencing, despite decades of evidence demonstrating how these failed punitive approaches only produce more harm and devastation. These laws exacerbate the opioid epidemic by undermining public safety which lead to more overdose deaths.

Maia Szalavitz: *“The pain of parents who have lost children to overdose is crushing. But doubling down on counterproductive policies is not the answer. We know what happens when we sentence dealers on a par with murderers – mass incarceration of Black and brown people and unaltered and ongoing widespread availability of drugs and death.”*

[Youth Placed in Adult Prisons Are More Likely to Die Early, Study Says](#)

July 31, 2023 | WVXU

New research conducted by the University of Cincinnati, RTI International, and Rutgers University found that youth incarcerated in adult prisons were 33% more likely to die before the age of 39. The study – which also found that contact with the criminal legal system without incarceration was associated with an 18% greater risk of premature death – underscores why policymakers and public safety leaders must ensure that we treat kids as kids and prioritize diversion and rehabilitation over punishment.

DTI Criminologist Dr. Ian Silver: *“The adult prison system is not designed for the crucial development years of adolescence. Within such a system youths may not only engage in risky behaviors, but they may directly experience risk factors associated with the likelihood of early mortality, including increased risk for violent victimization, substance use and disease.”*