




LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
GEORGE GASCÓN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

<http://da.lacounty.gov> •    @LADAOffice



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Dear Distinguished Members of the Community:

When I took the oath of office I not only promised to make changes, I also made a commitment that I would listen and that the community would have a place at the table. My promise to listen and learn from you extends to those who disagree with me, just as it does to those who could not agree more.

Over the past few days, I met with and heard from many of you, and while most have welcomed the reforms I have implemented, some have shared their concerns. Nearly all of the concerns I have heard center around my policy of ending all enhancements. To be responsive to your input I have decided to make some adjustments to my initial directives.

To be clear, I implemented this policy with no exceptions because enhancements have *never* been shown to enhance safety, but excessive sentences *have* been shown to increase recidivism and drive future victimization. Enhancements are also *the* primary driver of a system of mass incarceration that needlessly siphons billions into jails and prisons, and away from our communities and the investments victims of crime *want* us to make. Enhancements are also three times more likely to be applied to defendants who are African American or mentally ill.

Where aggravating factors exist I believe existing sentencing schemes provide sufficient latitude to prosecutors to seek higher sentences, but some victims remain concerned and I want you to know that we are listening. To be responsive to those concerns my office will adjust its policy to enable enhancements to be brought in a limited range of circumstances.

Deputies in my office may file enhancements in cases involving the most vulnerable, such as cases involving children, the elderly, and hate-motivated crimes. All enhancements that do not fit these criteria will be dismissed at the soonest court date after victims are notified in accordance with Marsy's Law. Our resentencing policy will reflect this amendment in eligibility determinations.

I recognize there are some victims that want this office to seek the maximum sentence permissible in their case, but punishment must be in the community's best interest, proportional, and it must serve a rehabilitative or restorative purpose.

As I have for decades, I will work tirelessly to restore victims and help them on their journey to survivor. What I have learned from victims and advocates alike over the years is that few crime victims find healing from the trauma they've suffered simply by putting another in a cage. To

provide input and further guide policy decisions made by my office, however, I have launched a victims advisory board made up of survivors and advocates.

While the dialogue I have had with victims and their families has been overwhelmingly positive and productive, I have also witnessed police unions, private attorneys and others with financial motives make provably false and salacious statements in a concerning attempt to sow fear and panic. Those in the public safety business who are deceiving our community into fearing for their personal safety are in the wrong line of work.

To be clear, the most heinous offenses—murder, rape, and crimes against children—represent a very small percentage of my office’s overall caseload, but the profiteers of mass incarceration continue to exploit gullible members of the media into airing vile and sensational claims about these relatively rare tragedies. The man alleged to have killed two people including a police officer, and that attempted to kill another is not getting a hall pass. He is 31 years old [and faces at least 72 years to life in prison](#). The individual who is alleged to have callously killed two of his own children and abused two others is 34 years old and [is facing a sentence of at least 50 years to life in prison](#). The man alleged to have shot a woman in the face eight times is facing [at least 25 years to life in prison](#).

Contrary to the inflammatory language that tough-on-crime types have used, if convicted these individuals will not “walk.” They will not simply “get probation.” Victims will not have to, “look over their shoulders for the rest of their lives.” Be deeply skeptical of claims intended to incite fear. My family lives here too, and I will always do everything I can to ensure those who pose a threat to us are kept *out* of our community.

I have and I will continue to make sweeping changes to our system of justice, and I will do it because it will make us safer. Over my 40-year career in policing and prosecution, I have lowered violent crime in every leadership position I have held. In partnership with police, the prosecutors in my office and those of you in the community, I have no doubt that trend will continue.

In solidarity,

Geo

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Geo', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

George Gascón
District Attorney
Los Angeles County