



CODE for
AMERICA



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Los Angeles, San Joaquin County District Attorneys Announce Code for America Partnership to Reduce, Clear Cannabis Convictions

54,000 CONVICTIONS ELIGIBLE FOR CLEARANCE BY RETHINKING PROCESS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

LOS ANGELES -- District Attorneys Jackie Lacey of Los Angeles County and Tori Verber Salazar of San Joaquin County joined with Code for America today to announce a cutting-edge, criminal justice reform partnership to automatically clear more than 50,000 eligible cannabis convictions under Proposition 64.

The two counties are among the first in California to take part in Code for America's pilot program that proactively identifies convictions that qualify for resentencing or dismissal under the voter-approved initiative in November 2016.

"We have partnered with Code for America to take on this monumental effort in the state's most populous county," District Attorney Lacey said. "As technology advances and the criminal justice system evolves, we as prosecutors must do our part to pursue innovative justice procedures on behalf of our constituents. This collaboration will improve people's lives by erasing the mistakes of their past and hopefully lead them on a path to a better future. Helping to clear that path by reducing or dismissing cannabis convictions can result in someone securing a job or benefitting from other programs that may have been unavailable to them in the past. We are grateful to Code for America for bringing its technology to our office."

"The war on drugs led to decades-long racial disparities in cannabis-related arrests and convictions," said Los Angeles County Board Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. "We have a responsibility to right these wrongs by utilizing the latest innovations in technology, such as Code for America's Clear My Record initiative, to ensure that people who have been disproportionately harmed by the war on drugs get the second chance they deserve."

“Since the passage of Propositions 47 and 64, the San Joaquin County District Attorney’s Office, in partnership with the Public Defender’s Office and the Superior Court, have worked collaboratively to successfully implement the law in a timely and efficient manner,” said San Joaquin County Public Defender Miriam Lyell in joint statement with District Attorney Tori Verber Salazar. “We have seen firsthand the capabilities of the Clear My Record tool to facilitate the record clearing process and provide a much-needed service to our community, restoring families along with tremendous cost savings to the People of the State of California. This powerful tool represents the best of public-private partnerships: harnessing the power of technology to create new pathways of opportunity for members of our community with convictions.”

“In the digital age, automatic record clearance is just common sense,” said Jennifer Pahlka, Founder and Executive Director, Code for America. “Thanks to the leadership of District Attorneys Lacey and Salazar, we’ve shown how records clearance can and should be done everywhere. When we do this right, we show that government can make good on its promises, especially for the hundreds of thousands who have been denied jobs, housing and other opportunities despite the passage of laws intended to provide relief. Clear My Record changes the scale and speed of justice and has the potential to ignite change across the state and the nation.”

Both offices have been working with Code for America since July 2018 to develop a system that examines cannabis convictions. There is estimated to be approximately 50,000 eligible convictions in Los Angeles County. There are an additional 4,000 eligible convictions in San Joaquin County.

Recognizing that California’s record clearance process was not designed for the digital age, this historic partnership demonstrates a growing momentum for technology-assisted record clearance in California. It builds on last month’s announcement that Code for America’s Clear My Record technology helped San Francisco dismiss and seal more than 8,000 cannabis convictions.

Now, the Los Angeles and San Joaquin county district attorneys will use the same Clear My Record technology to provide relief to individuals eligible under the law. The fundamental shift – moving from a petition-based process to an automatic process – will help achieve record clearance equitably, expeditiously and at scale.

Record Clearance for the Digital Age

Previously, each person seeking relief had to petition or apply to the court on their own to clear their records, but this is a time-consuming, expensive and confusing process. With the aid of Code for America’s Clear My Record technology, a district attorney’s office can automatically and securely evaluate eligibility for record clearance by reading and interpreting conviction data in just a few minutes.

This requires no action on the part of the individual and greatly reduced staff time and resources from a district attorney’s office — two obstacles to record clearance. Streamlining conviction data processing also will make it easier for courts to update records, ensuring that individuals can obtain relief as soon as possible.

This partnership sets the standard for the statewide implementation of Assembly Bill 1793, which tasks prosecutors with affirmatively reviewing convictions that are potentially eligible for dismissal or reduction under the Proposition 64 framework

before July 1, 2020. This novel approach also creates a blueprint for the future of record clearance for remedies beyond Proposition 64 — the development of policy and technology that expands, streamlines and automates the record clearance process at scale.

Code for America has been making it easier for people to remove eligible convictions from their records through their Clear My Record technology since 2016. Code for America has set a goal of clearing 250,000 eligible convictions nationwide by the end of 2019.

About Code for America

Code for America believes government must work for the people, and by the people, in the digital age, starting with the people who need it most. We build digital services that enhance government capabilities, and we help others do the same across all levels of government. We organize thousands of volunteers across nearly 80 chapters nationwide who improve government in their local communities. Our goal: a 21st century government that effectively and equitably serves all Americans. Learn more at codeforamerica.org.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights. Los Angeles County includes approximately 10 million residents.

About the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office

Located in the heart of California's Central Valley, the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office is a community-driven, law enforcement agency dedicated to upholding a healthy, fair and just society. Led by District Attorney Tori Verber Salazar, the Office is committed to delivering innovative approaches to prosecution and incarceration through education, prevention, and rehabilitation -- striving to deliver justice for all. San Joaquin County includes approximately 745,000 residents.