

Kimberly Toney

From: George Gascón
Sent: Monday, December 7, 2020 12:02 PM
To: LADA - ALL
Subject: I just took the Oath of Office
Attachments: SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-06.pdf; SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-07.pdf; SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-08.pdf; SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-09.pdf; SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-10.pdf; SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-11.pdf; SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-12.pdf; Special Directive 20-13.pdf; SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-14.pdf

Dear distinguished colleagues:

At noon today I had the immense honor of becoming the District Attorney. I am both humbled and excited by this opportunity, and I look forward to working and learning together.

If you're able, please join me this afternoon at 2:30pm as I will make some remarks to the office. You can access the Webex event by [clicking here](#). If you can't make it, don't worry, the session will be recorded and available for viewing after the fact.

I am sending this email immediately because I want to make sure you hear from me first and directly. I, like you, have dedicated my life to enhancing safety, reducing recidivism, and restoring victims. My methods of achieving those aims may be different, but we all have much in common.

In the days and weeks ahead I will be visiting each of the branches to spend some time with you. I look forward to speaking with and meeting you all, outside and socially distanced of course. The pandemic has impacted us all, and I want you to know that your health and safety is of paramount concern to me. We do have an essential role to play for the public even in the most trying times, but I believe there are steps we can take to further limit the risks posed by Covid-19. More on this in the days and weeks ahead.

Today I will be making a series of changes. The first is the implementation of our new mission statement:

"The Los Angeles District Attorney's Office will advance an effective, ethical and racially equitable system of justice that protects the community, restores victims of crime, and honors the rights of the accused. We are a learning organization that believes in reduced incarceration and punishment except in circumstances in which it is proportional, in the community's interest, and serves a rehabilitative or restorative purpose."

I want to reiterate that we are a learning organization. To facilitate communication and the free exchange of ideas we will be instituting mechanisms so that—in an office as large as ours—our standing and evolution as a learning organization isn't just dictated by those in leadership, but also by those on the line doing this work.

For those interested, I wanted to offer an optional reading list that I believe provides insight into my approach. It's not a complete list but the following are books I believe to be particularly helpful and compelling:

1. **"Charged." Written by Emily Bazalon.** Discusses the role of prosecutors in relation to mass incarceration, and where we go from here.
2. **"Punishment Without Crime." Written by Alexandra Natapoff.** Highlights ways in which the misdemeanor system perpetuates an unequal justice system.

3. **“Bleeding Out.” Written by Thomas Abt.** Discusses the seriousness of urban violence, what we are able to do about it, and why we must.
4. **“Just Mercy.” Written by Bryan Stevenson.** The most famous book on this list, one that tells the intimate story of a wrongful conviction, and one man’s resolve to fight the case.
5. **“Bedlam.” By Kenneth Paul Rosenberg.** Traces the decline of State Mental Institutions and the disastrous impact on the modern criminal justice system.

Importantly, I have also attached to this email seven special directives that go into effect tomorrow, December 8, 2020. They are as follows:

- SD 20-06: Pretrial Release
- SD 20-07: Misdemeanor Reform
- SD 20-08: Sentence Enhancements/Allegations
- SD 20-09: Youth Justice
- SD 20-10: HABLIT
- SD 20-11: Death Penalty
- SD 20-12: Victim Services
- SD 20-13: Conviction Integrity Unit
- SD 20-14: Resentencing

These policies are, by any measure, major departures from how this office has approached this work previously. We are, at least in part, in the business of gauging future human risk. It is not an exact science, but the available science, data and research tells us that excessive sentences exacerbate recidivism and claim more victims in the future. I know there is pressure in our profession to seek the maximum sentence possible in order to ensure you will not be blamed if a defendant recidivates in the future. Know that I will never blame you for seeking appropriate alternatives to incarceration, even if an intervention fails.

Finally, I know many of you are wondering what these changes mean for you personally and professionally. You can expect that there will be a change in our organizational structure but that will not happen until some time early next year. In the days ahead we will be sending out a survey to more fully understand our strengths and weaknesses, and to get a sense of your personal interests.

I look forward to what we will achieve together, and I know we will make this office an example for the rest of the nation to follow. I am grateful to have had the support of so many of you, and I will work tirelessly to earn the respect of you all.

With respect and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gascón'.

George Gascón
District Attorney
Los Angeles County