



The Power of the District Attorney

This June 8th, Sonoma County Voters will elect an attorney whose job it is to speak "for the people" in the criminal courts. The primary duty of the District Attorney (DA) is to promote the safety of our communities by prosecuting those who break the law. As the "peoples' lawyer," the DA is supposed to serve the interests of all members of the community and to enforce the laws without prejudice, bias, or political purposes.

A great deal of power and responsibility lies in the hands of District Attorneys. Yet most voters don't pay close attention to the positions of DA candidates. Many voters simply skip this box on the ballot. Even editorial boards of newspapers often do not bother to endorse DA candidates. Without involvement from voters, community organizations, opinion leaders and the media, the immense powers that we put in the hands of DAs will go unchecked.

Many voters don't realize that the District Attorney is one of the most powerful elected officials in the state.

The D.A. has the power to:

- Decide who should be sentenced to die.
- Set the stakes by deciding what charges to file.
- Send someone away for life under the Three Strikes Law.
- Give someone a second chance.
- Influence state policy.
- Listen to and respond to the community.

District Attorneys make policy decisions that go far beyond individual cases and impact the local community, county budgets and the state budget. Over the last 30 years, as the result of changes in the law, the discretion and therefore the power of District Attorneys is unprecedented.

- The DA can set young people on the path to rehabilitation or through a revolving door to prison.
- The DA can help build positive relationships between law enforcement and the community – or turn a blind eye to abuses by police and unfair enforcement of the law.
- The DA can be an advocate for the interests of all the people or can respond to special interests.

[What Do You Need To Ask?](#)