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**CALIFORNIANS: YOUR VOTE MATTERS!**

The California Public Safety Initiative, Homelessness, Drug Addiction and Theft Reduction Act, appears to have gathered enough signatures to be placed on the November ballot. I am a strong supporter of this Initiative as it seeks to address some of the unintended consequences of Proposition 47 which was passed by the voters in 2014. Since the passage of Prop 47, cities across California have seen a rise in homelessness, mental illness, and property crimes. These issues are apparent in our daily lives through news reports, business impacts, and community observations.

The Public Safety Initiative that will be on the ballot in November is a very measured response to rectify the challenges posed by Prop 47. First, the Initiative seeks to increase the penalty for the use of illegal drugs, only upon a third offense, to a “treatment mandated felony” wherein the offender would be offered drug and mental health treatment. Only if the offender refuses such needed treatment, would the offender serve custody time. Second, the Initiative seeks to reinstate consequences that existed prior to the passage of Prop 47 whereby repeat theft offenders could be charged with a felony. Pursuant to the Initiative, an offender who has suffered two convictions for theft could be charged with a felony for the third offense. Lastly, non-prescription fentanyl would be added to a list of hard drugs which would include more severe penalties for the trafficking of fentanyl.

As a career prosecutor, I have seen many changes over the years affecting accountability and sentencing in the criminal justice system. In the 1990s, after the voters passed Proposition 184 (Three Strikes Initiative), the law required prosecutors to allege all prior serious and violent felonies in a felony complaint resulting in lengthy incarcerations. For example, someone who committed a theft would serve 25 years to life if the person had suffered two prior robberies or residential burglaries in their lifetime. Many would say this was extreme and that the voters did not intend this outcome.

Fast forward to November 2014, Proposition 47, known as the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act, passed overwhelmingly by the California voters. Proposition 47 reduced the penalties for drug possession and theft crimes. Since its passage, we have seen the fallout: increased tents, trash, theft, mental illness, and drug addiction on our streets. Criminals brazenly ransack stores, businesses are closing, and customers and employees watch helplessly as thefts occur.

In my opinion, having worked in public service as a prosecutor for 28 years, I think the voters did not intend with the passage of Three Strikes in 1994 to lock people up for life for low level crimes. On the other hand, I also believe that the voters did not intend by passing Prop 47 to essentially decriminalize the use of illegal drugs and theft.

This Initiative is non-partisan, aiming to restore fundamental values: protecting life and property, ensuring opportunities for growth, and fostering thriving communities. Holding repeat offenders accountable and making sure there are proportionate consequences for criminal actions is necessary if we want small businesses to prosper, people to feel safe, and those in need to get the necessary help.

Recent reports suggest that the Governor and Democratic leaders in the Assembly and Senate are attempting to keep this Public Safety Initiative off the November ballot. As a parent and a prosecutor, I am concerned with these efforts if they are in fact true. As a non-partisan elected District Attorney, I believe today, more than ever, we need to unite as a city, county and state to ensure the safety of our communities. This Initiative seeks to restore common sense accountability and personal responsibility. There is no need to be divided on issues of common ground.

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