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## California needs criminal justice reforms to fight crime

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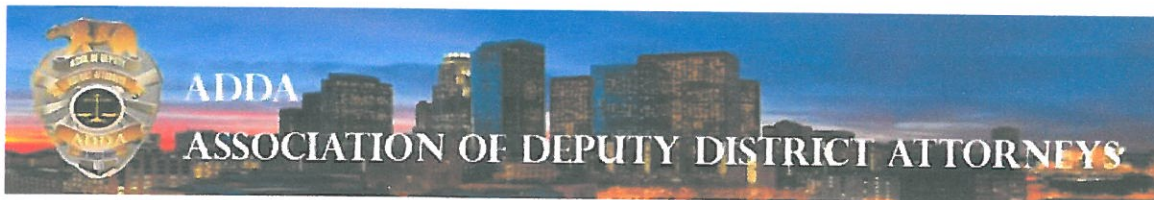
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## California needs criminal justice reforms to fight crime

*By Michele Hanisee*

The "[Reducing Crime and Keeping California Safe Act of 2018](#)" will [appear](#) on the 2020 ballot, as the [failure of some Registrars to timely validate](#) signatures prevented it from qualifying from the 2018 ballot. The initiative will make commonsense changes to fix problems caused by AB 109, Prop 47 and Prop 57.

While some supporters of changes to the California criminal justice system acknowledge that those changes have been "[plagued by a lack of vetting and thorough debate](#)" a very vocal minority, including Governor Jerry Brown, adamantly refuse to acknowledge any faults. [Brown vetoes such changes](#). In other instances, the Legislature simply [refuses](#) to consider [any changes](#).

The initiative has and will continue to come under attack by those

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*adage was: when the facts are on your side, pound the facts. When the*  
law is on your side, pound the law. When neither is on your side, pound  
the table." The campaign to oppose the initiative will be a "[pound the  
table](#)" approach, mixed in with some deliberate half-truths designed to  
mislead the public.

One most recent example of "half-truth" was a recent and [deliberately  
deceptive LA Times editorial](#), which as written would have readers  
believe the initiative would drop the limit for felony theft charges to  
\$250 from the current \$950. The [truth](#) is the initiative **does not** broadly  
lower the dollar limit for felony theft. Instead, it applies to the discrete  
instances where a repeat thief has two or more prior and separate  
convictions and commits a new theft where the value of the money,  
labor or personal property taken in the new theft exceeds \$250. The  
change in short, imposes the potential of a felony consequences only for  
repeat offenders who already have two or more prior convictions.

The LA Times also blithely asserts that "even under current laws, savvy  
prosecutors can add up the value of stolen goods in order to bring felony  
charges." Actually, savvy prosecutors know that published case law such  
as [People v. Hoffman](#) (2015) 241 Cal.App.4th 1304 and [People v.  
Salmorin](#) (2016) 1 Cal.App.5th 738, prohibit aggregation. Savvy  
prosecutors know that the Attorney General, in cases such as [People v.  
Chaney](#) (Case No. A147169), [People v Wilson](#) (Case No. E063844)  
and [People v. Wallace](#) (Case No. E063760) has conceded on appeal that  
amounts from separate theft offenses cannot be aggregated. Savvy  
prosecutors know that prior legislation to allow aggregation of theft  
amounts, such as [AB 2287](#) (Lackey and Wilk), have failed to pass.

The initiative will also make commonsense changes to parole that will  
assist law enforcement in the supervision of convicted criminals. The  
legislature approved similar changes with [unanimous bipartisan support](#)  
in [AB 1408](#). But that legislation was vetoed by the governor.

The initiative will [allow Governor Brown to keep his promise](#) to voters  
that "violent" inmates will not be released early under Prop 57. The  
initiative allows him to do so by specifying the violent crimes not eligible  
for release. [Dozens of similar attempts](#) by the legislature to do so have  
failed.

These changes, along with authorizing DNA collection to help solve  
violent crimes and exonerate the innocent, and reforming theft laws to  
address serial thieves and organized theft rings, are commonsense fixes.

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*THE MANY LAW ENFORCEMENT COURT SYSTEM AND VICTIM ADVOCACY*

initiative with opponents. We are also equally committed to calling out the table pounding and [misleading claims](#) that will be made by those opponents in the months leading to the 2020 election.

*CREDIT:* Michele Hanisee is President of the [Association of Deputy District Attorneys](#), the collective bargaining agent representing nearly 1,000 Deputy District Attorneys who work for the County of Los Angeles. To contact a Board member, click [here](#).

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Association of Deputy District Attorneys, 515 S. Flower St., 18th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90071

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