



SETH WILLIAMS' PLAN TO IMPROVE SAFETY BY CREATING A CHIEF PERFORMANCE OFFICE

The next District Attorney of Philadelphia must do more with less. The budget crisis alone insures that resources for prosecuting crime will be limited. Increasing arrests by the Philadelphia Police Department will require even smarter use of scarce resources. If elected District Attorney, Seth Williams will be ready to meet that challenge with discipline and focus.

To ensure that the programs and the policies of the District Attorney's office are working correctly, as District Attorney, Seth will create a new Chief Performance Officer (CPO) in order to evaluate every program within the office. This data will be collected and analyzed in order to correctly measure results and allocate limited resources and staff.

Much as similar data-drive processes COMP-STAT and CITI-STAT are helping improve police and government performance, the District Attorney and CPO will hold weekly reviews, or "D.A.-STAT," in which unit chiefs will discuss the crime problems they are facing and how well their team is dealing with those challenges. These public meetings will allow Seth to track the success of the office and serve as early warnings on what programs aren't working and where to find the greatest success. From community-based prosecutors to the Repeat Offenders Unit, these policy initiatives will only work if they are relentlessly monitored.

Importantly, rather than just review programs that currently exist, the CPO will be able to step back and start from scratch, asking about the evidence available to show whether and how well a strategy is working and whether other strategies would work far better than present approaches.

As Seth stated in his first policy paper, "Seth Williams' Plan to Improve Safety by Assigning a Prosecutor to Every Neighborhood", his goal is to reduce crime, not just increase convictions. Seth will work with the CPO and use "D.A. -STAT" to determine which policies work and to reward prosecutors for reducing crime, not just disposing of cases.

Together with the CPO, Seth will focus not just on winning cases, but preventing crime. With this policy initiative, Seth will make Philadelphia safer by

- Focusing on "what works";
- Building a winning team; and
- Making policies happen.

As District Attorney, Seth will:

Focus on What Works

As District Attorney, Seth would assign a Chief Performance Officer to be an independent assessor of the results produced by the Office of the District Attorney. The goal is to discover what works, what doesn't – and allocate resources and manpower accordingly.

Using the emerging body of knowledge from “evidence-based crime prevention,” Seth and his CPO would combine global and local evidence to decide what works best in Philadelphia. The global evidence would compare what is done in Philadelphia to rigorous evaluations of those practices reported by the US Department of Justice, university-based criminology and criminal justice departments, and other sources of knowledge about return on investments to prevent crime. The local evidence would come from the detailed calculations of how cases are processed in Philadelphia, with what consequences in terms of recidivism rates. Together, global and local knowledge will give Seth and his CPO the evidence they need to decide “what to cut, what to keep, and what to cultivate.”

One key example is drug courts. Rigorous tests in other cities have shown that diversion of criminal cases to Drug Court supervision of treatment programs can reduce crime. That is the global knowledge. But is Philadelphia diverting as many cases as it could -- and should -- given other global knowledge that most drug-abusing offenders do not commit violent crimes. Deciding whether Philadelphia is wasting court time and prison space on offenders who could be diverted to Drug Courts is an example of local knowledge. With a CPO on staff, Seth can put both kinds of knowledge to work.

Build a Winning Team: From Case-By-Case Management to the “Big Picture”

The Philadelphia D.A.'s office has traditionally been run like a private law firm, managing one case at a time. It has not been run on the basis of what it really does: shaping the performance of the entire criminal justice system. From every arrest to every parole decision, the Philadelphia D.A.'s Office steers the treatment of almost half of all the convicted offenders in the state. The tens of thousands of cases each year add up to major policy choices and tradeoffs. Yet the “big picture” of these decisions is not clear to even to the prosecutors involved, let alone to the voters.

By appointing a CPO to track the “big picture” of what the D.A.'s Office is doing, Seth would treat the office for the first time like a winning team, rather than like a group of star athletes. The CPO would start with tabulating wins and losses, from the standpoint of public safety. This will include analyses broken down by neighborhood, offense type and unit, of key statistics that have never been systematically reviewed:

- Rates at which prosecutors decline to prosecute arrests;
- Arrest rates of offenders on pretrial release, and for what charges;
- Rates at which judges dismiss cases for lack of prosecution;
- Percent of cases of serious violent crime plea-bargained as less serious; and
- The prison space budget: the cost of prison time spread across all cases.

These data and many other patterns will be the subject of a weekly management review process led by the D.A. and the CPO, which Seth Williams will call “D.A.-STAT.”

Different areas of performance will be addressed each week, on a rotating sequence, with the meetings open to the news media--just as former Police Commissioner John Timoney opened the COMP-STAT meetings to the press. In addition, Seth will publish a report twice a year online and in hard copy that shows all quantifiable performance statistics.

This sort of data-driven analysis will help improve the overall operations of the office. For example, one of the most important problems Seth will address is the fact that 59 percent of all felony cases are dropped because of a lack of prosecution (D.L.O.P) – almost double the national average. Working with the CPO, Seth will be able to evaluate the empirical data to determine what patterns exist if any that cause the large number of D.L.O.Ps and propose solutions to ensure that the number is dramatically lowered. That will increase justice for victims and increase the likelihood that hardened criminals are incarcerated.

Make Policies Happen

As District Attorney, Seth will not only coach the team, he will review every player's statistics. With the support of his CPO, Seth will monitor whether prosecutors are making decisions based on "what works" policies he mandates, or based on the traditional win-lose approach to taking on the most winnable cases. The key focus should be not on a contest between defense and prosecution, but on a mutual effort to reduce the recidivism rate. This will entail a culture change in our local courts. But it is only by abandoning the stale old arguments in favor of a new approach that we can make our city safer.

One key example is risk-based sentencing and prison overcrowding. The population of the Philadelphia Prison System far exceeds its capacity, and the next D.A. must act decisively to end this ongoing violation of civil rights. This must be done if only to prevent \$35 million per year in prison staff overtime costs -- money better spent on libraries and schools. With a new risk-assessment tool developed by the Adult Probation and Parole Department, prosecutors could soon agree to use fewer prison sentences for "super-safe" offenders who have minimal risk of violent crime. By agreeing to divert these cases to alternatives to incarceration, prosecutors could help reduce crime and save money. But all that may be easier said than done.

If such policies can be developed in collaboration with the courts and the Mayor, the final frontier will be the cooperation of individual prosecutors. Whether -- or how much -- cooperation is demonstrated by each unit and each Assistant D.A. will be a key matter for the CPO. By providing the District Attorney with regular reports on the compliance of prosecutors with bold new policies, the D.A. will have a much better chance of building a winning team.

Seth Williams, the City's former Inspector General, has 10 years of experience as a top prosecutor and supervisor in Philadelphia's District Attorney's Office. For more information, please visit his campaign website at www.votesethwilliams.com.

###