



Seth's remarks to the Fraternal Order of Police September 10, 2009

It's good to be back here at the FOP, among my friends in law enforcement, among our city's most amazing heroes. When I ran for District Attorney in 2005, I ran an honest campaign based on the issues that are important to Philadelphians, and I was proud to receive the endorsement of the FOP. I stand today for the same issues: getting illegal guns off our streets and prosecuting the dealers, keeping hardcore recidivist career criminals behind bars where they belong, and making Philadelphia a safer place to live, work, and raise our families.

As your District Attorney, I will institute a system of Community-Based Prosecution, literally putting prosecutors shoulder to shoulder with Police Officers in our neighborhoods. Assistant District Attorneys assigned to the charging unit will be assigned to the staffs of each of the city's Detective Divisions. I will shift the prosecutorial focus from the crime to the criminal, from the seriousness of their most recent charge to the seriousness of their overall criminal record. This means that even a shoplifting arrest would trigger a massive investigative effort by DAs and police to prepare the strongest possible case against a very dangerous person. It also means that dangerous offenders would be fast-tracked for very speedy prosecution, and there would be no plea-bargaining in such cases.

In fact, I pledge to you now – that as District Attorney I will only agree to a plea bargain in the best interest of saving the taxpayers the cost of a trial, and only if that plea bargain ensures that the defendant is in prison for so long that he or she can never again pose a threat to the community. I will fix our broken system of communication between the courts, the District Attorney's Office, and the Police Department. We all know that the sheer volume of cases in our court system often leads to Police Officers, court officers, and even prosecutors, with little prior notification. That lack of notification and preparation is chiefly responsible for the fact that nearly 60 percent of all felony cases are dismissed at preliminary hearing.

This is unacceptable to me, and I know it is unacceptable to you.

As District Attorney, my first priority will be to insure that the Police Department, the Sheriff's Office, the Clerk of Quarter Sessions, and the DA's Office work in tandem to streamline communications and information sharing.