

# ★ Your Voice Matters: Spotlight on Justice

People across the country are talking about the “criminal justice system.” Criminal justice is how we try to prevent crime, keep people safe, and treat people accused of breaking the law. Communities are also talking about how to make sure the justice system is safe and fair for everyone, especially those who are Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and other people of color.

This year’s election will include propositions that affect people who are impacted by the criminal justice system (Props 17, 20 and 25). Voters will also make decisions about city and county officials who are part of the criminal justice system. These officials make choices that affect community safety, justice, fairness, and equality. By voting for local officials, you can have a say in the way that justice works in your community.

**When you vote,  
choose candidates  
who share  
your values and  
will help your  
community thrive.**

## Sheriffs

**Your Sheriff is the top law enforcement officer for the county.** County sheriffs are elected by voters. Sheriffs supervise the conditions of county jails, direct a staff of deputies, and act as the local police in some communities. They can also:



- Start programs to prevent crime and support people leaving prison.
- Change department policies about use-of-force.
- Require deputies to wear body cameras.
- Choose how to cooperate with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

## District Attorneys

**Your county District Attorney (DA) decides how to treat people accused of crimes.** DAs decide if someone should be charged with a crime and what charges to file. They can also:



- Recommend jail, prison, or death penalty sentences.
- Support alternatives to jail and prison, such as rehabilitation or community mental health.
- Decide whether to charge police officers accused of brutality or corruption.

## Judges

**Judges oversee the court process and protect the rights of people in the legal system.** They have a great deal of power over whether the legal process is free of bias. Voters may see two different types of state judges on their ballot this year:



- **Superior (County) Court:** Each county has a superior court where judges deal with criminal and civil cases. Superior court judges can set bail, decide on punishment, and require alternate programs, like counseling or drug treatment.
- **Court of Appeals:** Appeals court judges can overturn decisions made by superior court judges. They can also determine if a law is legal under the California Constitution.

## Mayors and City Councils

**Your Mayor and City Council make decisions that affect criminal justice.** City councils oversee city services, including the police department. In some large cities, mayors also have more power to make decisions.

Mayors and city councils can:



- Set goals for public safety.
- Choose how money is spent.
- Appoint important city leaders, such as the police chief.

**For more information on criminal justice in your local government visit [ElectJusticeCA.org](https://ElectJusticeCA.org).**