



April 2018

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www.ohiopa.org



THE OHIO PROSECUTOR

From your President...



Greetings Ohio Prosecutors,

So while the weather has not cooperated thus far, the calendar indicates Spring has arrived. That means the OPAA Spring Training Conference is upon us and we look forward to seeing a large number of Prosecutors and Assistant Prosecutors at the Sheraton on Capitol Square taking advantage of some great CLE sessions. The OPAA Legislative and Executive Committees in conjunction with our front office have been very active during this first quarter reviewing legislation, communicating with State leaders and generally advocating for the interests of Ohio's prosecuting attorneys. Among the issues we have been dealing with is HB 411 which proposes changes to the process and basis for allowing wrongfully imprisoned persons to be compensated. OPAA continues to maintain that an innocent person that was wrongfully convicted and imprisoned should be entitled to compensation. However, the Association has taken the position that before such compensation is paid there should be a showing of actual innocence. Our Committees have taken the position that HB411 goes too far and creates the substantial possibility that a person actually guilty of serious felony crimes will receive compensation from Ohio taxpayers. For this and other reasons we have chosen to oppose this legislation. We have also raised concerns regarding the "stand your ground" legislation as proposed in HB 228. OPAA Executive Director Lou Tobin submitted a well written and strongly worded Op Ed letter to several Ohio newspapers explaining our concerns about the public safety issues impacted by HB 228. Contact the OPAA offices if you would like to obtain a copy.

Finally, we continue to emphasize the importance of staying involved. OPAA strongly encourages members to develop and maintain a good relationship with legislators from your districts. Open lines of communication help us explain our positions and allows us a greater opportunity to positively influence issues that impact those we serve.

Thank you Prosecutors and Assistant Prosecutors for the hard work you do and have a great spring!

Morris J. Murray

2018 OPAA President

From your Executive Director...



Dear OPAA Members –
It has been a busy few months in the General Assembly as members gear up for the summer/pre-election break. In the legislative section of this newsletter you will find updates on some OPAA priority bills that have changed and/or moved in the legislature in the last few months. We are particularly concerned about the possibilities of House Bill 228 (Stand Your Ground), House Bill 411 (Wrongful Imprisonment), House Bill 394 (Eliminate Mandatory Juvenile Bindover and SYO), House Bill 81 (Prohibit Death Penalty – Serious Mental Illness), and Senate Bill 66 (Criminal Justice Reform). The next few weeks are an important time at the Statehouse. What happens in April and May will have an impact on what bills do and do not pass before the General Assembly ends. I encourage all of you to review our priority bills and to contact your legislators to express your concerns. A contact list is also included in the newsletter. Your collective engagement is critical to successful advocacy. If you have questions about any of our priority bills or our positions on them, never hesitate to call or email.

Lou

New and Noteworthy

2018 OPAA Spring Training – April 19th and 20th

The Spring Training seminar will have an assortment of topics for the seasoned, new, and even juvenile prosecutor! Starting out on Thursday we will have a presentation from Rich Orman from Aurora, Colorado on prosecuting mass casualty homicides; Phil Bogdanoff will continue his journey through “privilege”; The Department of Education will join us to talk about truancy laws post HB410; and the AG’s office will be on hand to talk about RICO and their Economic Crimes Unit. Friday will include Chris Schroeder updating us on Ohio Supreme Court cases of interest; Assistant U.S. Attorney Kelly Galvin will present on enhancing federal sentences after *Johnson*; Allen County Prosecutor Juergen Waldick will be guiding us through trial advocacy; and Lara Baker-Morrish, Anne Murray, Elizabeth Well, and Liz Poprocki will be in to help us decipher “Marsy’s Law”. Also, something new for the OPAA, we applied for and have received approval for 10.75 general credit hours of new layer training! Thanks to Auglaize County Prosecutor Ed Pierce for bringing this to our attention.

Your 2018 Officers



Morris J. Murray
Defiance County
President



Carol O'Brien
Delaware County
President Elect



Juergen A. Waldick
Allen County
Vice President



Daniel R. Lutz
Wayne County
Treasurer



D. Andrew Wilson
Clark County
Secretary

At the Statehouse

Here is recently enacted legislation and priority legislation for 2018. For a full list of bills that we are tracking visit www.ohiopa.org. If you have any questions about the work of the legislature or the status of any legislation please let us know!

Enacted

SB 33 LEADS DISCLOSURE (EKLUND J) To allow disclosure of information from the law enforcement automated data system (LEADS) to a defendant in a traffic or criminal case. The bill also authorizes a court to continue an offender on ILC and places no limit on the number of times a court may do so. *Effective March 22, 2018.*

HB1 DATING PROTECTION ORDERS (Sykes, E., Manning, N.) To authorize the issuance of dating violence protection orders with respect to conduct directed at a petitioner alleging dating violence, to provide access to domestic violence shelters for victims of dating violence

and to require the Attorney General's victim's bill of rights pamphlet to include a notice that a petitioner alleging dating violence has the right to petition for a civil protection order. *Effective July 5, 2018*

HB79 MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL FIREARMS TRAINING
To provide for firearms training for tactical medical professionals; to permit such a professional who has received that training and has been authorized by the law enforcement agency to carry firearms while on duty; and to grant such a professional the same right to carry a concealed handgun in this state as a concealed handgun licensee. *Effective June 1, 2018*

Pending Priority Bills

HB81 DEATH SENTENCE-MENTAL ILLNESS (SEITZ B, ANTONIO N) To provide that a person convicted of aggravated murder who shows that the person had a serious mental illness at the time of committing the offense cannot be sentenced to death for the offense and to provide a mechanism for resentencing to a life sentence a person previously sentenced to death who proves that the person had a serious mental illness at the time of committing the offense.

Current Status: 6/6/2017 - House Criminal Justice, (Third Hearing)

Comments: *Rep. Seitz is working on a substitute version of the bill that would eliminate the burden shifting process. The substitute version would establish a pretrial hearing to determine whether the defendant is death penalty ineligible due to a serious mental illness. The defendant would be required to prove, by a preponderance of the evidence, that a "serious mental illness," as defined in the bill, impaired their capacity to conform their conduct to the law or appreciate the wrongfulness of their actions.*

Position: Oppose

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-81>

HB228 USE OF FORCE IN SELF-DEFENSE (JOHNSON T, LATOURETTE S) To assign to the prosecution the burden of disproving a self-defense or related claim, to expand the locations at which a person has no duty to retreat before using force under both civil and criminal law, and to modify the Concealed Handgun Licensing Law regarding a licensee's duty to keep the licensee's hands in plain sight, the penalties for illegally carrying a concealed firearm or improperly handling firearms in a motor vehicle, and the posting of warning signs regarding the possession of weapons on specified premises.
Current Status: 4/17/2018 - House Federalism and Interstate Relations, (Fifth Hearing)

Comments: *A substitute bill was adopted on April 10. While the OPAA continues to oppose this legislation, the substitute version of the bill does address an OPAA concern. The previous version of the bill provided that the burden of proof for self-defense shifted to the prosecution if the defendant produced*

evidence that tended to support that they were acting in self-defense. The substitute version of the bill provides that the burden shifts if the defendant can produce evidence upon which a factfinder can rationally find, when viewed in a light most favorable to the accused, that the defendant was acting in self-defense. The substitute bill also prohibits the use of the statutory affirmative defense for anyone who uses force during the commission of, attempted commission of, or escape after a felony offense of violence.

Position: Oppose

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-228>

HB355 SEXTING UNDER 21 (HILL B, REZABEK J) To generally prohibit sexting by a person under 21 years of age.
Current Status: 4/10/2018 - House Criminal Justice, (Third Hearing)

Comments: An amendment was added to House Bill 355 on February 13. The amendment would limit the new offense of "sexting" to individuals under the age of 19. The amendment also added language intended to address an OPAA concern about prosecutor discretion to file more serious charges when necessary. The amendment specifies that the bill does not preclude prosecution of a person for any other section of the Revised Code.

Position: Oppose

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-355>

HB365 REAGAN TOKES LAW (HUGHES J, BOGGS K)

To provide for indefinite prison terms for first or second degree felonies and specified third degree felonies, with presumptive release of offenders sentenced to such a term at the end of the minimum term; to generally allow the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to reduce the minimum term for exceptional conduct or adjustment to incarceration; to allow the Department to rebut the release presumption and keep the offender in prison up to the maximum term if it makes specified findings; to require the Department to establish a reentry program for all offenders released from prison who it intends to have reside in a halfway house or similar facility but who are not accepted by any such facility; to require the Adult Parole Authority to establish maximum work-load and case-load standards for its parole and field officers and have enough trained officers to comply with the standards; to require that GPS monitoring used for offenders released from prison under such monitoring specify restrictions, including inclusionary zones and necessary exclusionary zones; to require the Department to establish system requirements for GPS monitoring of such offenders by the Department or third-party contract administrators; to require the Department to operate a statewide database for law enforcement use containing specified information about such offenders; to require that third-party administrators for GPS

monitoring under a new contract with the Department provide and use a law enforcement-accessible crime scene correlation program; and to name the act's provisions the Reagan Tokes Act.

Current Status: 3/13/2018 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, House Criminal Justice, (Fifth Hearing)

Comments: House Bill 365 was amended on March 13 to address an OPAA concern regarding early release. The previous version of the bill authorized DRC to grant a 5% - 15% sentence reduction to offenders who demonstrated "exceptional conduct while incarcerated" or "adjustment to incarceration." The amendment authorizes the sentencing court to grant a reduction after a recommendation by DRC. The decision is to be made on the merits without a presumption in favor of release. See also Senate Bill 201.

Position: Support

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-365>

HB394 MANDATORY JUVENILE BINDOVERS

(REZABEK J) To eliminate mandatory and reverse bindovers, and modify the procedures for discretionary bindovers, of an alleged juvenile offender from a juvenile court to a criminal court; to revise the procedures for determining the delinquent child confinement credit; to revise certain delinquent child financial sanction dispositions and procedures and establish a separate restitution disposition; and to provide special parole eligibility dates for persons with an indefinite or life sentence imposed for an offense other than aggravated murder or another crime involving the purposeful killing of multiple persons committed when the person was under age 18 and special Parole Board procedures in those cases.

Current Status: 3/20/2018 - SUBSTITUTE BILL ACCEPTED, House Criminal Justice, (Second Hearing)

Comments: A substitute version of House Bill 394 was adopted on March 20. The substitute bill, among other things, now eliminates mandatory SYOs in addition to eliminating mandatory bindovers. The bill also makes substantial changes to parole eligibility for offenders convicted as adults when they were under the age 18.

Position: Oppose

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-394>

HB411 WRONGFUL IMPRISONMENT LAW (SEITZ B, SYKES E) To modify the state's wrongful imprisonment law.

Current Status: 3/14/2018 - House Government Accountability and Oversight, (Fourth Hearing)

Position: Oppose

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-411>

HB439 RISK ASSESSMENT-BAIL SETTING (DEVER J, GINTER T) To require courts to use the results of a validated risk assessment tool in bail determinations; to allow nonmonetary bail to be set; to require courts to collect certain data on bail, pretrial release, and sentencing; and to require the state Criminal Sentencing Commission to create a list of validated risk assessment tools and monitor the policies and procedures of courts in setting bail and utilizing pretrial supervision services.

Current Status: 3/20/2018 - House Criminal Justice, (Third Hearing)

Comments: *A substitute version of the bill was adopted on March 13. The substitute bill addresses two concerns raised by the OPAA. First, it establishes that the results of a validated risk assessment tool are a factor to be considered in addition to all other current factors when making bail determinations. Previously, the bill made the results of the tool outcome determinative. Second, the substitute bill removes language specifically prohibiting the court from requiring monetary security as bail when the amount of the monetary security is designed to keep the accused detained. The substitute bill does not address OPAA concerns regarding funding for pretrial services or the prohibition of "credit bonds."*

Position: Amend

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-439>

SB1 DRUG LAWS (LAROSE F) To increase penalties for drug trafficking violations, drug possession violations, and aggravated funding of drug trafficking when the drug involved in the offense is a fentanyl-related compound, to revise the manner of determining sentence for certain violations of the offense of permitting drug abuse, and to add lisdexamfetamine to the list of schedule II controlled substances.

Current Status: 4/11/2018 - Consideration of House Amendments; Vote 0-33

Comments: *Senate Bill 1 was amended on January 30 and passed by the House on February 28. The amendment prohibits prosecution of a person for trafficking or possession of fentanyl or a fentanyl related compound when the fentanyl or fentanyl related compound is combined with marijuana, unless the person knows or has reason to know that the marijuana contains fentanyl or a fentanyl related compound. Additionally, the amendment provides that it is an affirmative defense to possession of fentanyl or a fentanyl related compound if the fentanyl or fentanyl related compound was combined with a schedule III, IV, or V drug and the offender did not know or have reason to know that drug contained fentanyl or a fentanyl related compound. The Senate voted against the House amendment on April 11. The bill will now go to a conference committee.*

Position: Support

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-SB-1>

SB20 PERMANENTLY DISABLING CRIME

SPECIFICATION (HACKETT R) To require an additional prison term of 3 to 8 years for an offender who is convicted of or pleads guilty to a felony offense of violence if the offender is convicted of or pleads guilty to a specification that the victim suffered permanent disabling harm.

Current Status: 4/10/2018 - REPORTED OUT AS AMENDED, House Criminal Justice, (Third Hearing)

Comments: *A substitute version of Senate Bill 20 was adopted on March 20. The bill was amended again on April 10 prior to being voted out of committee. The substitute version of the bill requires an additional prison term of six years for an offender who is convicted of felonious assault with a specification charging that the victim suffered permanent disabling harm and was less than ten years old at the time of the offense.*

Position: Support

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-SB-20>

SB66 SENTENCING MODIFICATION-REHABILITATION (EKLUND J, TAVARES C) To modify

criminal sentencing and corrections law by including rehabilitation as a purpose of felony sentencing, removing the one-year minimum for presumptive fourth or fifth degree felony community control sanctions, modifying sanctions for a violation of a community control condition, modifying the manner of calculating confinement credits, modifying eligibility criteria and procedures for granting intervention in lieu of conviction, making offenders convicted of certain multiple fourth or fifth degree felonies eligible for conviction record sealing, revising procedures for the Adult Parole Authority to grant a final release or terminate post-release control, and modifying the criteria for considering a prison term sanction for a post-release control violation.

Current Status: 4/10/2018 - House Criminal Justice, (Second Hearing)

Comments: *Senate Bill 66 was voted out of the Senate on February 28 and has had two hearings in the House Criminal Justice Committee. The OPAA remains concerned with provisions in the bill to add rehabilitation to the purposes of felony sentencing, expand intervention in lieu of conviction to give offenders multiple opportunities to be placed in ILC and to include F3 drug possession within ILC eligibility, and to expand record sealing to authorize courts to seal an unlimited number of non-violent, non-sex offense F4/F5 convictions.*

Position: Amend

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-SB-66>

SB201 REAGAN TOKES LAW-INCARCERATION

(BACON K, O'BRIEN S) To provide for indefinite prison terms for first or second degree felonies and specified third degree felonies, with presumptive release of offenders sentenced to such a term at the end of the minimum term; to generally allow

the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to reduce the minimum term for exceptional conduct or adjustment to incarceration; to allow the department to rebut the release presumption and keep the offender in prison up to the maximum term if it makes specified findings; and to name the act's provisions the Reagan Tokes Law.

Current Status: 4/11/2018 - Bills for Third Consideration; Vote 33-0

Comments: *Senate Bill 201 was amended on April 11 and passed by the Senate later that day. The amendment partially addressed an OPAA concern regarding "good time." The bill previously authorized DRC to grant a 5% - 15% sentence reduction to offenders who displayed "exceptional conduct while incarcerated" or who demonstrated "adjustment to incarceration." The amendment places this early release decision in the hands of the sentencing judge but creates a presumption in favor of the release that must be overcome. The OPAA supports placing the decision in the hands of the judge but is opposed to the presumption in favor of release. See also House Bill 365.*

Position: Amend

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-SB-201>

SB208 FIREARMS CARRY-LAW ENFORCEMENT

(TERHAR L) To allow a law enforcement officer or investigator, whether on or off duty, to carry a weapon on certain premises open to the public.

Current Status: 4/11/2018 - Bills for Third Consideration; Vote 30-3

Comments: *Senate Bill 208 was amended on April 10 and voted out of the Senate later that day. Two amendments were included at the request of the OPAA: (1) to require off-duty officers to carry official identification if carrying a service weapon, and (2) to allow law enforcement agencies to prohibit officers from carrying service weapons when off-duty, other than a personal weapon. In addition three other amendments were included: (1) to clarify that undercover officers may still carry service weapons when consuming alcohol in the course of their duties, (2) to add "investigators" to the law enforcement personnel who may carry service weapons in a public establishment when off-duty, and (3) to stipulate that property owners are not liable for the conduct of an off-duty officer carrying a service weapon.*

Position: Support

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-SB-208>

SB231 SIERAH'S LAW-VIOLENT OFFENDERS

(GARDNER R) To provide for a violent offender database, require violent offenders to enroll in the database, and name those provisions of the act "Sierah's Law;" to modify the

membership and duties of the Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition and eliminate its repeal; to require halfway houses to use the single validated risk assessment tool for adult offenders that the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has developed; and to provide that the notice of release from prison of specified serious offense offenders that is given to sheriffs is to be the same as that provided to prosecuting attorneys and eliminate the notice to sheriffs regarding pardons, commutations, paroles, and transitional control transfers of offenders.

Current Status: 4/11/2018 - Bills for Third Consideration; Vote 31-2

Comments: *Senate Bill 231 was amended on February 27 and voted out of the Senate on April 11. The amendment to the bill provides for some judicial discretion to determine who should and should not be placed on the violent offender registry.*

Position: Amend

State Bill Page:

<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-SB-231>

Bill information courtesy of Hannah News Service, Inc.

Join us at the Statehouse!

If you are ever in Columbus on a Tuesday or Wednesday, let us show you around the Statehouse, take you to a committee meeting, or introduce you to some of the decision makers on capitol square. There are also "interested party" meetings throughout the year that are worth attending. We'll keep you posted on those that we have an interest in. Come experience the process!!

Ohio's Parkland Response

Here is the list of bills introduced in the General Assembly in response to the February school shooting in Parkland, FL. They are being provided for informational purposes only.

HB563 FIREARM BACKGROUND CHECKS (WEST T) To prohibit a federally licensed firearms dealer from transferring a firearm while a background check is pending unless 30 days have elapsed.

HB564 FIREARM WAITING PERIOD (WEST T) To require a 72-hour waiting period between the purchase and delivery of firearms and to impose a fine for violating this requirement.

HB585 AMMO & FIREARM OWNERSHIP LIMITS (HENNE M) To expand the definition of dangerous ordnance to include armor piercing ammunition and expand the definition of an automatic firearm to include any device within the federal definition of machine gun; to create additional conditions under which an individual may not possess a firearm or dangerous ordnance and to eliminate the process by which an individual may apply for relief from a weapons disability; to generally eliminate the process by which an individual may apply for relief from a weapons disability; to generally prohibit a person

from buying, purchasing, obtaining, or furnishing a firearm on behalf of a third party; to provide for the entry of protection orders into the federal NCIC database and LEADS; and to provide for the issuance by a court of an extreme risk protection order.

SB260 ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN (SKINDELL M, TAVARES C) To prohibit a person from knowingly possessing or acquiring an assault weapon and to require the Attorney General to prepare for the establishment of a firearm and ammunition transactions database.

SB278 EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDERS (SCHIAVONI J, WILLIAMS S) To enact the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act to allow family members, household members, and law enforcement officers to obtain a court order that temporarily restricts a person's access to firearms if that person poses a danger to themselves or others.

SB279 IMPROPER FIREARM STORAGE (TAVARES C, SYKES V) To prohibit a person from improperly storing or leaving a firearm if the person knows that a minor is able to gain access to the firearm and to provide criminal penalties, including forfeiture of firearms, if a minor gains unauthorized access to an improperly stored firearm.

SB283 FIREARM TRANSFER BACKGROUND CHECKS (THOMAS C, SCHIAVONI J) To prohibit a firearm transfer from a person who is not a federally licensed firearms dealer to a person who is not a dealer unless it is done through a dealer, through a law enforcement agency, or pursuant to a specified exception, and to require that background checks be conducted when a firearm is transferred through a federally licensed firearms dealer or a law enforcement agency.

SB284 FIREARM PURCHASE-MINIMUM AGE (THOMAS C, SCHIAVONI J) To raise the minimum age to purchase a firearm to age 21 and to increase the penalty for improperly furnishing firearms to a minor.

SB285 FIREARM TRANSFERS AT GUN SHOWS (THOMAS C, SCHIAVONI J) To regulate the transfer of firearms at a gun show.

SB286 REGISTER FIREARMS WITH COUNTY SHERIFF (THOMAS C, SCHIAVONI J) To require firearms to be registered with the county sheriff in the county where the firearm owner resides.

SB288 DANGEROUS ORDNANCE CLASSIFICATION AND RESTRICTIONS (EKLUND J, KUNZE S) To expand the definition of dangerous ordnance to include armor piercing ammunition and expand the definition of an automatic firearm to include any device within the federal definition of machine gun; to create additional conditions under which an individual may not possess a firearm or dangerous ordnance and to

from buying, purchasing, obtaining, or furnishing a firearm on behalf of a third party; to provide for the entry of protection orders into the federal NCIC database and LEADS; and to provide for the issuance by a court of an extreme risk protection order.

NHTSA Training

The National Judicial College will host a webinar on "Marijuana and Impaired Driving" on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 1:00 p.m. The course is aimed at helping judges better understand marijuana use and its impairing effects on the driver, and how to better adjudicate drugged driving cases.

<http://www.judges.org/courses/online-learning/webcasts/>

NHTSA has created a new online Ignition Interlock course for law enforcement which will provide officers with two hours of Continuing Education Credits that will prepare them for traffic stops in which they encounter drivers who have (or should have) Ignition Interlock Devices installed.

<https://www.firstforward.com/Marketplace/Detail/e05373d5-1d70-11e8-bbc3-001b219f8cb3>

Lastly, the Ohio Traffic Safety Office and the Summit County Sheriff's Office will be hosting a "Prosecuting the Drugged Driver" course at the Summit County Sheriff's Office Training Facility on May 11, 2018. This course has been approved for 6 hours of free CLE hours for prosecutors. Email Robert Wakefield @ <mailto:rwake@dps.ohio.gov> by April 20, 2018 for more information.

Although each training is geared toward the intended audience, they are open to all prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement. Please take advantage of this free training, and please pass this information on to your prosecutor, judicial, and law enforcement colleagues.

2018 OPAA Training Dates

Please join us in 2018 for our CLE training programs.

Spring Training, April 19th and 20th,
Sheraton Columbus at Capitol Square, Columbus, Ohio

Summer Workshop, June 22nd and 23rd
Cedar Point, Sandusky Ohio

Fall Training
September 20th and 21st
Crowne Plaza on Playhouse Square, Cleveland, Ohio

Support Staff
October 18th
Sheraton Columbus at Capitol Square, Columbus, Ohio

OPAA Annual Meeting, November 29th and 30th
Hilton Columbus Downtown, Columbus, Ohio

Other Trainings:

NDAA Opioid Training, April 25th-27th
Renaissance Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio

Membership Services

Community Outreach

Summit County Produces Videos - WHY I'M A PROSECUTOR

Why am I a Prosecutor? It's a question we all are asked countless times. Through my 18 years as Summit County Prosecutor, the answer is easy. I love fighting for justice and standing up for victims. However, when I speak with members of the community, not many people know or understand what it means to be a prosecutor.

This can be an emotionally difficult job. Many times, we see the worst of human behavior. We see and hear things the average person only can imagine, especially if they watch crime dramas or keep a close eye on the news.

We also see the best humanity has to offer, like survivors of crime who have the courage to face the person who did awful things to them.

So why does someone want to be a prosecutor? My office recently started a public awareness campaign titled "Why I'm A Prosecutor" where we produce monthly videos which highlight an assistant prosecutor in my office. The videos are geared toward informing the public of what it's like to be a prosecutor. The idea came from the National District Attorney's Association, which started a similar campaign a couple of years ago. The finished videos are then placed on our office website as well as our office social media accounts.

Assistant prosecutors each answer the same five questions – Why are they a prosecutor; What's the best part of being a prosecutor; What's the most

difficult part of being a prosecutor; What case has impacted them the most; What do they think are the biggest misconceptions the public has of prosecutors.

The questions may be the same, but the answers vary. Maybe they or a family member was a victim of a crime. Or they had a positive experience as an intern. Or maybe this is what they've always wanted to do. I have a lot of caring, hard-working individuals working for me and I believe their stories are a good way to give the public some insight and a better

understanding of what it's like to be a prosecutor. I want people to know how very proud I am of the prosecutors in my office and the important work they do.

Being a prosecutor brings the satisfaction of knowing that every day you go to work you are making a difference in the lives of people. There are not a lot of jobs where you have the impact that a prosecutor has in protecting our community from dangerous criminals and seeking justice for crime victims. However, being a prosecutor is more than putting bad guys behind bars.

For me, becoming a prosecutor was very personal. I wanted to help people who were victims of crime. I also wanted to play a role in keeping our community safe. Shortly after I started working in a local city prosecutor's office in 1986, I was the 11th of 13 women attacked by a serial rapist. I was very fortunate as I was able to fight off my attacker and suffered only minor physical injuries. After that experience I became an even stronger advocate for crime victims. While it was a horrible experience, I am glad I was able to turn it into something positive.

There are also some misconceptions about being a prosecutor. One of the things I hear often when meeting people in the community is "you're really nice, I didn't expect that". I guess people assume that someone in a job like mine will be mean and nasty! I speak to people called for grand jury on the last day of their two-month term and they always tell me they have so much more appreciation for prosecutors and law enforcement after everything they hear and see.

My hope is these videos show people we're human too and give them a better understanding of who we are and what we do. We are just like them and care about the community where we work and live.

Videos: <https://co.summitoh.net/prosecutor/>

(A special thank you to the Summit County Prosecutors Office for this article)

If you or someone on your staff would like to submit an article for the next issue of The Ohio Prosecutor, please contact the OPAA.

OPAA Website

The "Pressroom" is being updated regularly. Check out the latest news from around the state or in your hometown!
www.ohiopa.org

OPAA Committee Meetings

Executive and Legislative

April 18 – Sheraton Capitol Square

May 24 – Mills Park Hotel, Greene County