



LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS

To Reduce Crime & Incarceration

As we step into 2024, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration (LEL) is looking forward to exciting opportunities to advance innovative criminal justice reform. We are planning the first of what we hope will be a series of in-person events designed to explore relevant topics and foster meaningful connections among members. We will also continue to facilitate timely conversations with national experts and the larger public safety community through our ongoing webinar series and other programming. Stay tuned for more details in your inbox!

Opportunity to engage: We are considering creating an “LEL Speakers’ Bureau” through which selected members of LEL will serve as experts to field media inquiries about criminal justice reform policies; innovations in policing, prosecution and corrections; and the public narrative about reform and public safety, among other topics of interest. More information to come as we are in the early stages of development. Please reach out to Jessie Brenner at jessica.brenner@lawenforcementleaders.org if you might be interested in participating.

WELCOME TO LEL’S NEWEST MEMBERS!

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to four new LEL members!



Police Chief Axel Henry

Saint Paul, Minnesota

In his 24 years of service in Saint Paul, Chief Henry has served as a patrol officer, sergeant, commander of the Central District and Narcotics, Financial Intelligence and Human Trafficking Units, and as a senior commander of the Eastern District. He has advanced several public safety reforms including spearheading the city’s body-worn camera program, designing and leading the Domestic Violence Blue-Print for Safety Program, and serving as a trainer and use of force expert for more than 20 years. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated commitment to working with his community and city leaders to solve problems and address violent crime, empowering neighborhoods to co-produce safety, and diversifying and developing the police department at all ranks.



Former Warden Dr. Nneka Jones Tapia

Chicago, Illinois

Dr. Nneka Jones Tapia is an experienced psychologist currently serving as the Managing Director for Justice Initiatives at Chicago Beyond where she focuses on creating strategies to reduce incarceration and increase safety in all communities. She collaborated with more than 100 individuals impacted by incarceration to publish *Do I Have the Right to Feel Safe?*, a holistic vision for safety in corrections. Dr. Jones Tapia joined Chicago Beyond in 2018 as the first-ever Leader in Residence where she launched a pilot program called Beyond Incarceration that focused on reducing stigma and trauma that surrounds young people impacted by parental incarceration, resulting in trauma-informed child-friendly contact visitation for every person housed in Cook County Jail. Prior to joining Chicago Beyond,

she was the warden of Cook County Jail in Chicago, becoming the first psychologist in the nation to have led a correctional facility. During her tenure, she directed several bold strategies to promote wellness and reduce recidivism in the jail, decreasing the population by 20% and creating the Cook County Mental Health Transition Center to support successful reentry that has become a model for corrections nationally.



Emergency Management Director Charles Tubbs

Dane County, Wisconsin

With over four decades of law enforcement experience and dedication to public service, Director Tubbs has earned recognition at state and national levels for his initiatives in public safety, community engagement, and crisis response. He currently serves as the Director of Emergency Management in Dane County, responsible for the preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in support of local governments before, during, and after catastrophic emergencies or disasters. His previous experience includes serving as the Interim Chief of Police and Deputy Chief of Police of Beloit Police Department (WI), Administrator of the Wisconsin Division of Juvenile Corrections, Chief of Police for the Wisconsin State Capitol Police Department, and being appointed by Governor Evers to the Wisconsin Law Enforcement

Standards Board and Juvenile Justice Commission. With expertise in policing, homeland security, emergency management, and human relations, Director Tubbs has successfully led and assisted with fostering peaceful resolutions and navigating complex challenges including coordinating responses to natural disasters, Covid-19 pandemic preparedness efforts, and de-escalating large-scale protests.



Former District Attorney Tori Verber-Salazar
San Joaquin County, California

Tori Verber-Salazar served as the first woman to be elected District Attorney in San Joaquin County. Her innovative approach to criminal justice reform and exemplary leadership led to a 20% reduction in violent crime, 30% reduction in recidivism, and a 52% increase in team diversity. During her tenure, DA Verber-Salazar added over 150 team members to ensure public safety and build alternatives to incarceration. She led the successful implementation of several programs including the first restorative justice program and live-in reentry program for people released from incarceration to access services, gain employment opportunities, and reunite with their families. She spearheaded the implementation of Propositions 64 and 47 which provided 50,000

community members with clean records and over 2 million Californians with record clearance. Lastly, she expanded victim resources through the creation of the Family Justice Center, providing services to over 1,500 survivors every month and quadrupling victim witness services.

LEL's ADVOCACY

This quarter, LEL has continued to amplify the voice of law enforcement in public safety and equitable justice at both the state and national levels:

New York: LEL joined the No Price on Justice campaign in support of the End Predatory Court Fees Act (S.313/A.4183) that will end mandatory court surcharges, which have been an ineffective source of revenue generation. The bill would also eliminate probation fees to allow for more successful reentry; end mandatory minimum fines so that judges can set them based on people's ability to pay; and end incarceration and commissary garnishment of unpaid fines and fees.

Federal: Thirty-two members of LEL signed a letter to President Biden urging his Administration to reschedule cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III under the Controlled Substances Act. This letter followed a recommendation made to the DEA by the Department of Health & Human Services after a review conducted by the FDA. Reclassifying marijuana can allow law enforcement to better prioritize limited public safety resources and collaborate to combat the harms that arise from the unregulated cannabis market. You can read more about it here!

Stay tuned for more federal and state advocacy opportunities in the coming months. If you are involved in any advocacy efforts or have any topic suggestions for future events that you would like LEL to consider, please reach out to Jessie Brenner at jessicabrenner@lawenforcementleaders.org.

LOCAL EFFORTS BY MEMBERS

In their own jurisdictions, LEL members continue to advocate for and lead the implementation of a wide array of innovative criminal justice strategies. Here are some highlights:

Officer Wellbeing, Retention, and Diversity

- Dallas County (TX) DA **John Creuzot** announced his support for the launch of the F1RST Wellness Program developed by the DA's Office's Wellness Committee to address the impact of continuous stress exposure on law enforcement wellbeing. The resources provided are tailored to the needs and challenges of specific roles in law enforcement and support mental, physical, and emotional health.
- Montana State Corrections Director **Brian Gootkin** has created a new recruitment and retention team that has helped decrease the prison officer vacancy rate at Montana State Prison from 40% in late 2022 to 3.9% in January 2024. Their efforts have included robust outreach campaigns, a streamlined hiring processes, and a new job shadowing program for recruits.
- Prince William County (VA) Police Chief **Peter Newsham** and state senator Jeremy McPike are pushing legislation that would allow 'Dreamers', individuals approved under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, to become law enforcement officers in Virginia, further increasing the diversity of the department.

Community Resources and Trust Building

- Madison (WI) Police Chief **Shon Barnes** created the Madison Proximity Project through which officers and residents shadow each other at their places of employment, helping to foster mutual trust and understanding between the community and law enforcement.
- New Hanover (NC) DA **Ben David** announced a new Community Justice Center, transitioning what had previously been the New Hanover County jail into a comprehensive system of victim support services for sexual assault and intimate partner, family and youth violence founded on an evidence-based model. The program will be located in the Harrelson Center, currently housing 20 additional non-profits, and across the street from the New Hanover County Court, to provide an integrated approach to public health and safety.
- Montana DOC Director **Gootkin** praised the state's Healing and Ending Addiction Through Recovery and Treatment (HEART) Fund program that has helped over

3,100 individuals since its launch in 2022 by providing essential behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment programs across seven contracted jails.

- The Santa Cruz (CA) Sheriff's Office under **Jim Hart** opened a new Sobriety Center to provide treatment for people with substance abuse problems as an alternative to jail.
- The Forsyth County (NC) Sheriff's Office under the leadership of **Bobby Kimbrough** is one of five agencies in the world to pilot new drone technology to help law enforcement provide effective first response and solve crime. The drones are able to deliver Narcan and other resources to aid in life-threatening emergencies in the community.

Innovative Reforms and Policy Changes

Policing

- Madison (WI) Chief **Barnes** is launching a 90-day Hate Crimes Task Force to help both officers and the community confidently identify, report, and handle hate crimes incidents.
- Brooklyn (NY) DA **Eric Gonzalez** moved to vacate the conviction of Steven Ruffin, who served 14 years in prison. After a thorough reinvestigation, the DA's office's Conviction Review Unit found that Mr. Ruffin, who was 18 when he was arrested, was mistakenly identified as the culprit in the murder of a 16-year old.
 - DA **Gonzalez** also announced a 25% drop in shootings across the borough in 2023, with 150 fewer people suffering gunshot injuries than the year before.
- Former NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Training **Tracie Keese** wrote a letter along with ten other former law enforcement officials across the country in support of the How Many Stops Act, which requires New York City police officers to document all investigatory stops and provide demographic data.

Prosecution

- Ramsey County (MN) is implementing a Prosecutor-Initiated Sentence Adjustment, a measure championed by County Attorney **John Choi** that will allow prosecutors to ask a judge to adjust sentences from previous criminal prosecutions that no longer align with the pursuit of justice, the protection of the public, or the efficient allocation of resources. Choi's office is currently examining and pre-screening all cases for priority consideration.
- The Prosecutorial Performance Indicators interactive dashboard, co-managed by former Assistant State Attorney **Melba Pearson**, will now publicly share data about who the Broward County (FL) State Attorney's office prosecutes and how they prosecute as part of a national project advocating for more prosecutorial transparency. The dashboard displays data including racial and ethnic disparities in court cases, timeliness of case processing, and resource allocation.

Corrections

- A new Nashville program under Sheriff **Daron Hall** was created to protect the voting rights of eligible individuals in local jails by providing voter registration,

guides on how to navigate the absentee ballot request process, voting rights restoration support, and civic education through a partnership between the Sheriff's Office and the Election Commission.

- Alexandria (VA) Commonwealth's Attorney **Bryan Porter** worked with the local sheriff and court clerk to make expungement of criminal records available to more people by waiving all service fees, taking fingerprints at no cost, and overseeing the entire process with refunded filing fees for anyone whose expungement is granted.
- Minnesota Department Of Corrections Commissioner **Paul Schnell** welcomed the creation of a new citizen panel to decide parole decisions for individuals serving mandatory life sentences, decisions which he previously made on his own. Schnell will chair the panel, which was authorized by statute last year. It will include appointees from both political parties including two positions requiring a background in psychology or neurology with an understanding of adolescent brain development.

Awards and Recognition

- Middlesex County (MA) Sheriff **Peter Koutoujian** was honored as the 2023 Sheriff of the Year by the Major County Sheriffs of America for his commitment to excellence in public safety, employee wellness, and innovative correctional programming.
- The Denver Police Museum honored former Denver Police Chief **Robert White**, the department's first Black police chief, with its African American Trailblazer Award. White discussed his career including how he increased the diversity of the Denver Police Department, laying the foundations for other police chiefs of color.

SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES...

[Despite a National Spike in Homelessness, Some US Regions are Finding Solutions, Brookings \(February 2024\)](#) — Analyzes the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2023 point-in-time (PIT) count which tallies the number of people experiencing homelessness, finding that cities have the evidence and tools at their disposal to reduce homelessness.

[Beyond Treatment: How Clubhouses for People Living with Serious Mental Illness Transform Lives and Save Money, Fountain House \(February 2024\)](#) — Evaluates the economic impact and social costs of an evidence-based practice known as clubhouses and how they can improve the quality of life for those living with serious mental illness.

[What the Race for Santos's Seat Says About Crime Messaging, The Brennan Center for Justice \(February 2024\)](#) — Refutes the conflation of crime and immigration in election year rhetoric.

[Final ‘One in Five’ Report Examines How Mass Incarceration Deepens Inequality and Harms Public Safety, Sentencing Project \(January 2024\)](#) — The final installment of this series on drivers of racial disparity in imprisonment examines the laws and policies that exacerbate inequality and disproportionately overburden communities of color.

[Upcoming Webinar: Sensible Traffic Ordinances for Public Safety \(STOPS\) Toolkit Launch, The Vera Institute of Justice \(March 6, 2024 at 2P ET\)](#) — In the past year, Vera’s STOPS project supported 5 jurisdictions that introduced, or passed a policy, to limit or eliminate non-safety related police stops. They will be hosting a [webinar](#) on **Wednesday, March 6th at 2 pm ET** to unveil a toolkit designed to walk jurisdictions through early considerations to implementing policy changes around non-safety stops. You can register for the webinar [here](#).

As always, thank you to our members for working to keep our communities safe and to advance our justice goals. If you would like your local efforts featured in our next newsletter or on LEL’s social media, please contact Jessie Brenner at jessica.brenner@lawenforcementleaders.org.

Note: If you change titles or have a new preferred email address, please reach out to us to ensure you receive our updates on news, events, and opportunities to engage with the group!

Follow us on [Twitter!](#)



Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration unites over 200 current and former police chiefs, federal and state chief prosecutors, and attorneys general from across the country to urge for a reduction in both crime and incarceration. With this group, law enforcement joins the emerging movement calling for an end to unnecessary, widespread incarceration.

For general inquiries, please contact info@lawenforcementleaders.org

For media, please contact media@lawenforcementleaders.org

To become a Law Enforcement Leaders member, contact us [here](#)