

Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association

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PDAA Launches Best Practices Committee *Prosecutors from 8 states gather for professional development summit to advance evolving criminal justice practices and procedures*

HARRISBURG, PA – Pennsylvania’s District Attorneys Association today announced the formation of the Pennsylvania Best Practices Committee, which will serve as a collaborative, non-partisan network to identify best practices, research and legal methods to assist in the proper and just evolution of the criminal justice system.

On Monday and Tuesday of this week, members of the newly formed committee will serve as hosts for a U.S. Justice Department—sponsored “Best Practices for Justice” summit. The summit includes prosecutors from Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota and Vermont and will include discussions on issues ranging from changes in science and technology to vigilance in maintaining integrity and confidence in the criminal justice system.

“Prosecutors take very seriously their role as ministers of justice and their responsibility to protect the integrity of the criminal justice system,” said PDAA President and Union County District Attorney D. Peter Johnson. “As ministers of justice, this committee formalizes our association’s work to stay on the front lines of changes in technology, science, and criminal behavior to ensure accuracy, reduce errors and at all times achieve justice.”

Pennsylvania’s committee formalizes a role the PDAA has fulfilled informally for years providing leadership in identifying best practices and helping district attorneys and law enforcement share information among each other with the goal of enhancing the quality, effectiveness and application of the tools available as they navigate complex cases. The initiative was approved by a unanimous vote by the PDAA’s executive committee, which represents Pennsylvania’s 67 elected district attorneys and over 1,000 prosecutors and law enforcement throughout Pennsylvania.

“Prosecutors in Pennsylvania have a long history of identifying and promoting reforms and efficiencies to the criminal justice system in order to protect the innocent, convict the guilty and ensure justice for the victims of crime,” said Johnson. “The criminal justice system has evolved and will continue to evolve, as it should. As an association, we want to ensure that at all times justice represents the truth and that citizens will have continued confidence in the criminal justice system.”

Montgomery County District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman will chair the PDAA committee. The committee will function in two primary roles: identify and communicate best practices and assist in the real-world implementation of these practices in the administration of justice; and to provide networking and consultation for prosecutors to allow for the voluntary review of cases among fellow prosecutors and allow multi-disciplinary experts to support prosecutors in their search for the truth.

Pennsylvania is among the first states in the nation to institute a Best Practices Committee. Other states include Colorado, Missouri and New York.

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