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San Diego Leaders, Prosecutors, and Businesses Hold Roundtable on Retail Theft and Proposition 36

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San Marcos, CA – San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan, the California District Attorneys Association (CDA), and Californians Against Retail and Residential Theft (CARRT), joined by local officials and business leaders, convened a roundtable today to address retail theft and the implementation of Proposition 36.

The event brought together dozens of business owners, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and community leaders to discuss how Proposition 36 is already impacting California's public safety landscape.

"Nine months into the implementation of Prop 36 we're seeing a positive impact on public safety," said San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan. "The results are encouraging, and Prop 36 is helping restore the rule of law while also giving hope to businesses that have long faced repeat theft threatening the safety of their employees and customers. By pairing accountability with treatment and rehabilitation, the data shows this law is beginning to tackle the root causes of habitual criminal behavior."

Participants highlighted how Proposition 36 provides new tools to address repeat theft, while also investing in rehabilitation programs targeting root causes such as fentanyl abuse, homelessness, and addiction.

"The Chamber is proud to advocate for Proposition 36, and we are already seeing its positive impact here in the San Diego region," said Justine Murray, Executive Director of Public Affairs for the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce. "We are steadfast in our commitment to working with leaders across California to ensure Prop. 36 is fully and effectively implemented. The safety of employees, residents, and visitors is vital, and it will always stand as the top priority of San Diego's business community."

Over the past decade, shoplifting has increased more than 35% across California. In response, voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 36—a landmark measure supported in all 58 counties—that closes loopholes left by Proposition 47. The law restores accountability for habitual offenders while expanding treatment programs to help individuals break cycles of crime and addiction.

“We are witnessing a major shift in California’s approach to crime and addiction,” said Greg Totten, CEO of the California District Attorneys Association. “Prop 36 proves we can hold repeat offenders accountable while also giving people a real path to recovery.”

However, Proposition 36 has already shown results in San Diego County. As of September 10, a total of 2,100 cases have been charged under Proposition 36—665 for repeat offender theft-related crimes and 1,435 for drug possession with mandated treatment.

Statewide, CDAA reports that early data is promising. Prosecutors are filing between 1,200 and 1,400 Proposition 36 cases per month, with more than 75% of defendants having prior felonies and nearly one-third with prior serious or violent felony convictions.

Despite this early success, the state has yet to fully fund Proposition 36, leaving local governments and law enforcement without the resources needed to implement the law effectively and expand rehabilitation and treatment programs.

“Businesses and employees are reporting that Prop 36 is acting as a deterrent—with would-be thieves increasingly worried about prison time,” added Matt Ross of CARRT. “The next step is for state leaders to fully fund accountable treatment programs to deliver on the will of the voters.”

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