



CALIFORNIANS AGAINST RETAIL & RESIDENTIAL THEFT

**Orange County Leaders, Law Enforcement, Prosecutors, and Businesses
Hold Forum on Retail Theft and Proposition 36**

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Costa Mesa, CA — Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes, State Senator Catherine Blakespear, the Orange County District Attorney's Office, the Orange County Business Council (OCBC), and local business leaders - including members of Californians Against Retail and Residential Theft (CARRT) - convened a forum today to examine retail theft and the impacts of Proposition 36 more than one year after its implementation.

Proposition 36, which passed overwhelmingly in November 2024, represents a significant shift in California's criminal justice system by restoring accountability for repeat offenders while expanding pathways to rehabilitation.

Participants discussed how gaps in implementation are affecting business operations and community safety. The forum also focused on strategies for improving partnerships between businesses and law enforcement, addressing emerging crime trends, and strengthening crime reporting.

"CARRT appreciates the opportunity to participate in this retail theft forum hosted by the Orange County Business Council," said Matt Ross of CARRT. "These forums are a valuable opportunity to discuss what is working and what more needs to be done."

This marked the third Proposition 36 forum in which CARRT has participated. In 2025, CARRT hosted similar forums in Sacramento and San Diego with prosecutors, law enforcement, and business leaders. Additional forums are being planned in the Bay Area, Fresno, and the Inland Empire.

"Businesses and employees are reporting that Proposition 36 is acting as a deterrent, with would-be thieves increasingly concerned about prison time," Ross added. "The next step is for state leaders to fully fund accountable treatment programs so we can deliver on the will of the voters."

Proposition 36 allows certain low-level theft and drug-possession offenses to be charged as felonies when offenders have prior convictions. For theft crimes, even petty theft under \$950

may be charged as a felony for individuals with prior theft-related convictions, and prosecutors may aggregate multiple incidents to meet felony thresholds. The measure also creates a new category of treatment-mandated felonies requiring drug treatment; individuals who fail to complete treatment may face up to three years in state prison.

Early statewide data from the California District Attorneys Association is encouraging. Prosecutors are filing between 1,200 and 1,400 Proposition 36 cases each month. More than 75 percent of defendants have prior felony convictions, and nearly one-third have prior serious or violent felony convictions.

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