



TORI VERBER SALAZAR
District Attorney, San Joaquin County

SCOTT A. FICHTNER
Assistant District Attorney

KRISTINE M. REED
Assistant District Attorney



JAMES BOJKO
Chief Investigator

News from the Office of District Attorney STEVE WAGSTAFFE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 23, 2021

BAY AREA PROSECUTORS JOIN FORCES TO COMBAT ORGANIZED RETAIL THEFT

*As Organized Retail Thieves Turn to New Tactics,
Bay Area Prosecutors Form Alliance to Ensure Accountability*

STOCKTON – Today, San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe announced an alliance between Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, Marin, San Joaquin, and Santa Clara counties, law enforcement, and state agencies to combat the recent increase in organized retail theft. Each office has pledged a prosecutor to collaborate and participate in the joint effort.

“The recent premeditated retail theft mob action in multiple cities across Northern California is intolerable and will not be accepted by District Attorneys, law enforcement officials and our community members,” said **San Mateo District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe**. “Anyone caught engaging in such criminal conduct should expect to find themselves facing prosecution, conviction and incarceration. There is no leniency for such behavior.”

“Organized retail theft has adverse and costly impacts on business owners and consumers alike,” said **District Attorney Tori Verber Salazar**. “Through a partnership with our neighboring counties, we will hold all parties accountable, including fencing rings and individuals who purchase stolen goods. We commend Governor Newsom and Attorney General Bonta for taking organized retail theft seriously and we implore the community to report suspicious resell activity to assist law enforcement’s efforts in tracking organized retail theft rings.”

While police work to strengthen investigations and collaborations across jurisdictional boundaries, prosecutors’ offices similarly can better ensure accountability through information sharing. The partnership between counties and local agencies would allow for the sharing of information through data collection, crime analytics, as well as pooled investigative tools to successfully prosecute those involved with organized retail theft schemes. In addition to the shared resources between counties, the District Attorney’s Offices would continue to collaborate with their local retailers and State Representatives to ensure statutes that cover organized theft rings are enforceable and improve safety for consumers.

“Fencing and organized retail theft rings operate across jurisdictional boundaries,” said **Contra Costa District Attorney Diana Becton**. “As prosecutors, we must respond to the nature of these crimes and operate with our partners to more effectively meet this challenge. Those responsible for perpetuating these crimes are working together as a team, and to ensure accountability for their crimes, law enforcement needs to work together as a team too.”

“Retail theft crimes are affecting all counties in the Bay Area as well as across the nation. Collaboration and shared strategies with neighboring prosecutors and law enforcement partners are critical to both preventing and responding to organized retail theft,” said **San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin**. “This alliance of prosecutors is committed to developing strategies to combat these organized crimes. Together, we are determined to stop those who participate in organized retail theft, including by dismantling the fencing networks that make this type of crime profitable.”

“The recent acts of retail thefts, robberies and mass-mob burglaries throughout Northern California will not be tolerated. These are clearly carefully orchestrated crimes, working together in large groups to create a mob-like mentality,” said **Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O’Malley**. They are instilling fear in merchants, customers and the wider community. This is especially appalling at a time where many are out and about during the holiday season. Be assured that those caught and arrested will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.”

“California has seen shifts in crime trends and tactics, and Bay Area prosecutors are forming this partnership to meet the moment,” said **Cristine DeBerry, Executive Director of the Prosecutors Alliance of California**. “Partnerships like these reflect the need to implement modern solutions to modern problems. These crimes happen quickly, and they may not be caught in the act. Through information sharing and coordination, there will be greater likelihood of arrests and accountability than everyone working in isolation.”

###