

# WHAT A DIFFERENCE A D.A. MAKES

## WHO'S ON YOUR BALLOT

<b>Berkshire County</b>	Andrea Harrington (D) Timothy J. Shugrue (D)
<b>Bristol County</b>	Shannon M. McMahon (D) Thomas M. Quinn, III (D)
<b>Cape and Islands</b>	Melissa R. Alden (R) John. F. Carey (R) Robert Joseph Galibois (D) Daniel Higgins (R)
<b>Essex County</b>	James P. O'Shea (D) Paul F. Tucker (D)
<b>Hampden County</b>	Anthony D. Gulluni (D)
<b>Worcester County</b>	Joseph D. Early, Jr. (D)
<b>Norfolk County</b>	Michael W. Morrissey (D)
<b>Middlesex County</b>	Marian T. Ryan (D)
<b>Franklin and Hampshire Counties (Northwestern District)</b>	David E. Sullivan (D)
<b>Plymouth County</b>	Timothy J. Cruz (R) Rahsaan Hall (D)
<b>Suffolk County</b>	Ricardo Arroyo (D) Kevin R. Hayden (D)

District Attorneys (DAs) make life-changing decisions for thousands of people in Massachusetts every day. And voters like YOU have the power to hold them accountable.

## VOTE

### Primary Election

Tuesday, September 6

### General Election

Tuesday, November 8

**ACLU**  
Massachusetts



# DISTRICT ATTORNEYS 101

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A district attorney (DA) is an elected official who oversees the prosecution of state criminal cases in a county. They are elected every four years, and do not have any term limits. This means they are accountable to the voters of the county. DAs lead a staff of prosecutors, most commonly known as assistant district attorneys. The DA's office is responsible for working with police and witnesses to investigate crimes, to decide whether or not prosecute, and, if the case goes to trial, to attempt to prove that a person suspected of a crime is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

## CHARGING DECISIONS

In Massachusetts, police apply for criminal charges at the district court upon arresting an individual. Once the court issues the charges, the local district attorney's office can then decide if they will prosecute. Certain crimes require the DA to present evidence to a grand jury that will issue an indictment for superior court cases. In those cases, the DA's office also decides whom to seek indictments against and what charges to seek indictments for.

## BAIL

Bail is intended to make sure people charged with a crime return to court on their next court date. District attorneys' offices can ask the court to set bail for a defendant, and DAs can also decide how much bail to recommend. Often, those accused of a crime simply don't have enough money to pay the bail, and can face months or years in jail before they receive a trial. While in jail, people can lose their jobs, housing, and even custody of their children. For these reasons, people held on bail often plead guilty to resolve their case more quickly, rather than face a long time in jail even before their day in court.

## FAIRNESS

The district attorney's office is responsible for providing the accused with all the information to which they are entitled under the law, including evidence that may prove the innocence of the person accused. In addition to turning over evidence, DAs have a role to play in eliminating racial disparities. In Massachusetts, Black people are incarcerated at eight times the rate of white people and Latinx people are incarcerated at four times the rate of white people. These rates are much higher than the national average. Racial disparities in the system are not fair or justified, and they must be rectified.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

We often hear district attorneys talk about the need for public safety and the importance of representing victims. Unfortunately, some DAs rely on outdated "tough-on-crime" rhetoric and policies that drive incarceration and fail to address the underlying causes of crime. Other DAs pursue evidence-based approaches that focus more on rehabilitation than punishment or retribution.

## CRIMINAL LAW REFORM

District attorneys help set policies. Although they do not make laws, DAs can and have used their influence with the legislature to affect reform of criminal laws. DAs can propose stiffer and harsher penalties for existing crimes, or they can choose to express support for bills that decriminalize non-violent offenses or reduce sentences.