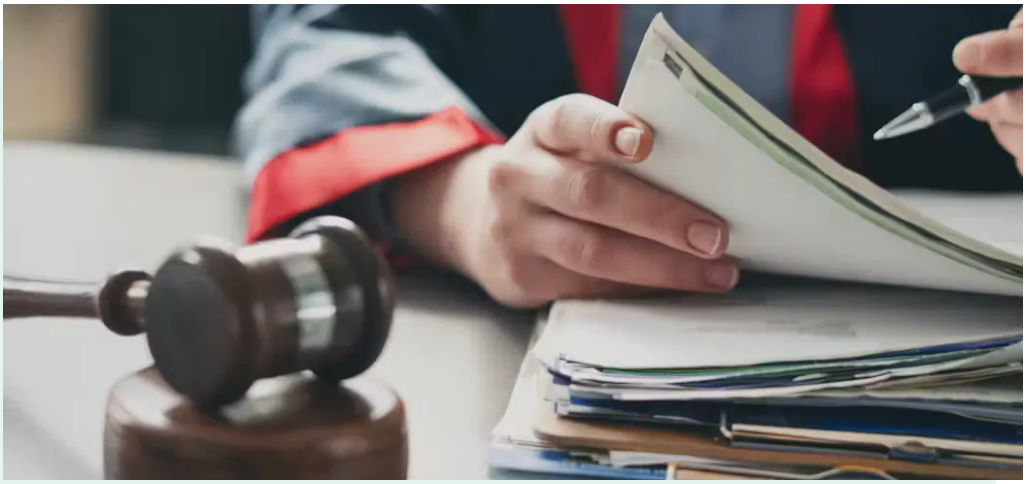
2026 年 10 月 27 日

社会与心理 CET-6 / KAOYAN / IELTS / TOEFL / CET-4 857 词

# Why your vote for local chief prosecutor will matter on Election Day

为什么你为地方首席检察官投的一票在选举日很重要

难度 进阶 · CET-6 425-500 · KAOYAN 50-65 · IELTS 6-6.5 · TOEFL 4-4.5 · CET-4 425-500



图片: The Conversation

Before most Americans step into the voting booth in November, they will already know their choices at the top of the ballot, in races for governor, the Senate and House of Representatives. But a race near the bottom of the ballot - for the chief prosecutor in their local district - will probably affect the voters' lives more directly.

As a former prosecutor and as a scholar of the criminal courts for over three decades, I have seen how local district attorneys take the lead in responding to crime. This vote matters.

## A prosecutor's portfolio

The chief prosecutor in local criminal courts - the titles vary, such as district attorney, prosecuting attorney, state's attorney or county attorney - has enormous discretionary power over criminal law enforcement .

While state legislators pass the statutes that define crimes , local prosecutors decide where to spend limited enforcement dollars . They decide which cases to file and work with the police to address the crimes that matter most in each county.

重点词汇

16 词条

**Convictions***
n 定罪

**diversion***
n 转处项目

**statutes***
n 法规

**pleas***
n 认罪答辩

**mushroomed***
v 迅速增长

**incapacitate***
v 使丧失能力

**incarceration**
n 监禁

**incumbents**
n 现任者

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## Why your vote for local chief prosecutor will matter on Election Day / 续

Prosecutors also choose how to negotiate guilty pleas . While judges select criminal sentences in each case, prosecutors influence that choice with their own recommended sentence.

No official matters more than the chief prosecutor when it comes to using the resources of the courts and prisons.

Prison: A central tool

Until the early 2010s, party labels did not matter in these local races, because Republicans and Democrats backed similar priorities . Prison was the central tool at every prosecutor's disposal.

The prosecutor's job centered on charging as many people as possible with crimes that could result in the longest possible prison term. Convictions for less serious crimes were valuable ways to build the defendant's criminal record , making it easy to obtain prison sentences in the future.

Democratic and Republican candidates figured that voters wanted them to be "tough on crime." Because the easiest way to send that signal was to press for more prisons, the size and cost of prisons mushroomed for decades .

And because most prosecutors presented the same basic options to voters, incumbents usually ran unopposed . Even when opposed, they beat the challengers in most races .

Expanding options

Over the past 10 to 15 years, however, prosecutor candidates have offered voters some real choices .

In King County, Washington, for example, voters in 2022 chose a candidate who emphasized prevention and mental health services alongside traditional criminal prosecutions. Her opponent had instead promised to file more criminal cases.

Voters today have more power to decide how many jail cells they want to fund and use. More traditional prosecutor candidates might continue to focus on prisons in their responses to crime, relying on its presumed power to incapacitate criminals.

This was the campaign strategy of a 2025 challenger in Norfolk, Virginia, who called for a return to heavier prison use after four years of efforts by the incumbent to reduce incarceration. Voters rejected this proposal and returned the incumbent to office.

Reform-oriented prosecutors, such as the district attorney in Milwaukee, are depending on less expensive nonprison punishments , including treatment programs for a wider range of crimes, reserving prison for more serious violent offenses. These reordered priorities seem to work as designed . They reduce prison use without increasing crime rates .

These reform-oriented prosecutors , like the county attorney in

重点词汇

16 词条

**discretionary**
adj 自由裁量的

**unopposed**
adj 无对手的

**bail**
n 保释金

**reentry**
n 重新融入

**dashboards**
n 数据看板

**transparency**
n 透明度

**vote**
n. 投票；选票

**evaluate**
v. 评价；评估

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Minneapolis, might also develop diversion programs, sending some defendants into community service programs. Typically, prosecutors offer diversion to defendants under age 18. Some offices, such as the Pima County attorney in Arizona, offer diversion to adults accused of less serious crimes.

Some prosecutors, like the district attorney in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, design and lead some of these programs themselves . Often they partner with nonprofit groups that promote public safety .

More competitive races

Prosecutor candidates also give voters choices on which defendants to hold in the local jail, at public expense, while their charges are pending. Some offices have reduced or eliminated the use of cash bail, without increasing local crime . Candidates also give voters choices about new approaches to victim support services and programs designed to improve the reentry of convicted people into the community.

Apart from the various options that prosecutor candidates can offer, voters can expect prosecutors to work transparently. Candidates can commit to routinely releasing data about office operations. That’s what the Democratic candidate did in her successful race for commonwealth attorney in Arlington, Virginia . That data can allow journalists and researchers to evaluate trends over time, not just information about individual cases.

There are many offices - such as Jacksonville, Florida , and Boulder, Colorado - that show their work on data dashboards . That transparency allows the public to judge, between elections, how well the prosecutor delivers on campaign promises.

Recent political trends show that prosecutor elections are becoming more competitive , with more incumbents facing challengers. These races are also being driven by politics at the national level , as voters increasingly elect prosecutor candidates from the same party they prefer in national and state offices.

In this changing environment, I believe it’s worth voters’ time to explore expanded options in prosecutor races.

Ronald Wright does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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阅读笔记

# 词汇复习

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