



OFFICE OF THE  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**  
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA  

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TODD SPITZER

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Date: March 17, 2023

Kimberly Edds  
Director of Public Affairs  
Office: 714-347-8405, Cell: 714-504-1917  
[media@da.ocgov.com](mailto:media@da.ocgov.com)

## Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer Issues Statement in Response to Governor Gavin Newsom's Announcement to Transform San Quentin from a Prison into a Rehabilitation Center

SANTA ANA, Calif. – Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer issued the following statement in response to Governor Gavin Newsom's announcement to transform San Quentin from a prison into a rehabilitation center:

*Governor Newsom wants us to transform public safety in California. I agree. We need to go back to a time when California was safe – before Governor Newsom was in charge.*

*Today's announcement at San Quentin – which he is renaming the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center – is nothing new. It's just another way to release more and more violent felons back into the community with little consequence – and no consideration for the victims they left in their wake. And they think no one will notice.*

*Except everyone is noticing.*

*In 2011, before a decade of reckless public safety policies were unleashed, California was the safest the state had been in three decades. Decarceration and decriminalization efforts have led to “mass victimization,” through more homicides, sexual assaults, aggravated assaults, and drug poisoning deaths,” according to a new study by the Pacific Research Institute, Paradise Lost Crime in the Golden State 2011-2021.*

*No one is surprised. Closing prisons and releasing convicted felons unfit for release back into our communities has unsurprisingly resulted in more crimes committed by the very people who should still be incarcerated and people who should have never been victims victimized.*

*Society has an absolute right to punish criminals for committing crimes. A marked decrease in appetite for punishment combined with reckless law changes to retroactively roll back sentencing and allow convicted felons ever-evolving options to be released from custody has resulted in homicides increasing 31.6%, aggravated assaults rising 34.6%, and drug-related deaths jumping 715% between 2011 and 2021.*

*On paper, reported burglaries have decreased during that time – but that can be easily attributed to the fact that entering a retail business with the intent to shoplift is no longer defined as a burglary under the law. And thefts have also seen a decrease – but not because they are not happening, but because we as a society have largely given up on reporting crimes in which we have little confidence California law allows anyone to be held accountable.*

*We cannot redefine the definition of a crime and then celebrate a reduction of that crime because it no longer meets the definition. Victims are still being victimized and crimes are still being committed – regardless of how you define it.*

*Over the last decade the halls of justice have become crowded with more and more victims while the prisons have become more and more empty. When I was chair of the Select Committee on Prison Construction and Operations, we significantly reduced the prison population – and we kept the community safe doing it.*

*I’m in favor of rehabilitative programming – but you have to earn it. But instead of having to earn it, tens of thousands of dangerous and violent felons are walking out of California’s prisons – cashing in on Newsom’s get out of jail free cards.*

*Violent inmates have become the beneficiaries of a convoluted concoction of “good time” credits that not even law enforcement agencies are privy to unless they swear under penalty of perjury they will keep that information confidential – even from the victimized.*

*Governor Newsom said at today’s press conference that we have to be focused on “homecomings.” But he never mentioned the homecomings that will never happen for the Californians who were murdered – by the very people the governor is empathizing with.*

*Our community deserves better. Transforming California into a state of lawlessness where there is only crime and no punishment only benefits the criminals – and puts us all at risk of being victimized. We can't redefine the word safe – and think that we are.*

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