



June 7, 2016

Justice in America

On February 26, 2015, I introduced House Bill 3387 to amend the Attorney General Act, which provides that the Illinois Attorney General shall have the duty to investigate prosecutorial misconduct, including violations of Illinois Supreme Court Rules and statutes, upon a complaint filed with the Attorney General by a criminal defendant, and to file a motion with the court having jurisdiction over the defendant's case requesting relief that the Attorney General and the defendant deem appropriate, including dismissal of the charges or referring the information contained in the investigation to the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission of the Supreme Court of Illinois .

On June 6, 2016, the New York Times published an Editorial entitled “To Stop Bad Prosecutors, Call the Feds.” I believe that the editorial is an appropriate and long overdue call to get rid of criminal intent in America’s justice system. Wherever there is local injustice with prosecutors charging the wrong people for crimes due to local politics, racism or prejudice, or when local prosecutors do NOT charge the right people for crimes they have committed, we need a mechanism to appeal to a higher authority such as the Justice Department in the federal government.

According to the New York Times editorial, “Prosecutors are the most powerful players in the American criminal justice system. Their decisions — like whom to charge with a crime, and what sentence to seek — have profound consequences.

“So why is it so hard to keep prosecutors from breaking the law or violating the Constitution?

“The short answer is that prosecutors are almost never held accountable for misconduct, even when it results in wrongful convictions.

“It is time for a new approach to ending this behavior: federal oversight of prosecutors’ offices that repeatedly ignore defendants’ legal and constitutional rights. There is a successful model for this in the Justice Department’s monitoring of police departments with histories of misconduct.

“Among the most serious prosecutorial violations is the withholding of evidence that could help a defendant prove his or her innocence or get a reduced sentence — a practice so widespread that one federal judge called it an ‘epidemic.’”

Just as the legislation I proposed would call on the Illinois Attorney General to investigate incidents of prosecutorial misconduct in the state of Illinois, the New York Times editorial calls for the Justice Department to investigate prosecutorial misconduct in the states. I think that tax-payers should not be on the hook for a system that is corrupt and that continues to destroy freedom and the promise of this nation.

Mohandas K. Gandhi once said, "I believe in the essential unity of all people and for that matter of all lives. Therefore, I believe that if one person gains spiritually, the whole world gains, and if one person falls, the whole world falls to that extent."

America will never live out its founding principles if we continue to allow our justice system to continue to destroy generations of American families.

The New York Times editorial has taken a major step to sound the alarm of injustice in America's justice system. The opinion piece calls for change in America's justice system. This type of journalism must be praised. It is important for all media outlets to join the call for a better justice system and to take a stand versus injustice against families in America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'La Shawn K. Ford'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'L' and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District