

Speaker

Clean Verbatim Transcript

Madeline
Carroll:

Thank you, Maria. Very happy to be here. This is an incredibly important issue not just for Portland or for Oregon as a whole because it really has implications statewide, but also for the country as a whole as well.

Oregon DA for the People, over the last couple of years, has done a tremendous amount of work as a coalition of organizations, including Pacific Northwest Family Circle, to shape the conversation around what the role of the district attorney should be, and this is a conversation that's happening across the country and in a lot of communities. District Attorneys are elected officials and the public needs to have a say in how they do their jobs.

Here in Portland in Multnomah County in our last election, DA Mike Schmidt was elected by a vast majority. Over 75 percent of voters voted for him. And, that was based on the fact that the community came together to talk about the issues, talk about the powers of the district attorney, and how those powers can be used and abused; to talk about what we want the district attorney to do and be in our community.

Mike Schmidt rose to the occasion and had a platform that was aligned with what the community was asking for, including holding police accountable and declining to prosecute offenses that are lower offenses that do not keep us safe by bringing those into prosecution, including nonviolent protesting offenses.

So what's happening right now is, after all the analysis that communities and organizations did to find where we had influence to hold police accountable and to change

the criminal legal system locally so that we are not contributing to mass incarceration, as well as other issues, especially issues that acutely affect Black and Indigenous people and other People of Color in our community.

Now when Mike Schmidt our new DA is following through on what he said he would do during the election, following the platform that he put forth, following what the community has asked him to do, his power is being usurped by the federal government when they, along with [Governor] Kate Brown, who has gone along with this scheme, gave Oregon State Police the power to bring federal charges and take that power away from local District Attorneys.

It's incredibly alarming, and it not only undermines the district attorney but it undermines the electoral process. It means that we, as voters, have no way to hold our government accountable in how it treats people in our criminal legal system and, without any power to do that at all, it means that we're living in a perpetual state of state violence that we can't change, no matter what.

The focus on protesters and the right to protest is also incredibly important, because if we aren't given the ability to enact change through the electoral process, which is the process that we tried to use... uh *one* of the processes we tried to use, protest has also been one area of legal action, lots of different areas, but without allowing communities to change their criminal legal systems, their local systems through elections and while also coming down hard on protests and making that avenue of public engagement also very difficult and dangerous, the government is taking away our ability to

voice our concerns, to pressure those in power to make change happen that we want to happen.

And, that's something that isn't just about Portland. It isn't just about Oregon. It's about the whole country.

Maria Cahill: Thanks, Madeline. I'm going to invite everyone to go ahead and just put your videos back on. I will do the same. And we can all be here together on the recording.

I'm just, these were... I hope, I hope now that you have a better understanding of why this is such an urgent issue why this is such an important issue.

I do want to apologize that our co-founders were not able to make it tonight because of the fires here in Oregon. We're streaming from Portland, Oregon and if you've seen the fire map, you would not be surprised. So, I'm sorry that more family members weren't able to speak on the importance of the DA, but the DA is the keeper of the justice that Pacific Northwest Family Circle Families need to get the justice for the loved ones.

So, we're in an odd position where we've been struggling to move the power of the DA to the people, feeling like the DA has too much power and now we're in an odd situation where we're trying to protect the power of the DA so that it can move to the people instead of up to the federal government where it does not belong.

I want to just say that there are a couple of things that we plan on doing next and I want to invite you to do those...