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Contact: Kimberly MacEachern
Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council, Staff Attorney
Phone: (602) 542-7222
1951 West Camelback Road, Suite 202
Phoenix, Arizona 85015

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Media Advisory

THE BUSINESS OF CRIME FIGHTING PART II
By: Elizabeth Ortiz, Executive Director of APAAC

The preamble of the US Constitution sets these priorities: We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, **establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility...**

Arizona's Constitution offers protection of individual rights as the state's ultimate purpose in Section 2, where we also added the enumerated rights of victims.

Public safety, then, is the highest and best purpose of government. Law enforcement and prosecutors together are the first line to achieving that goal to the best of our human ability and given the resources the people share with the government for that purpose.

It is not an endeavor in thrift. Fighting crime requires equipping law enforcement not only for safety and pursuit, but with technology, as we must stay hot on the trail of the advances being made by the criminals as their operations become more sophisticated. As seen recently, even within the bureaucratic constraints of budgeting and the practical constraints of funding, we have to find a way to make it work at the speed of the crime. Witness the speed as we equip agencies across the nation with body cameras, much like we did with the predecessors Kevlar and Tasers.

Meanwhile, we must invest in the legal and political policies that will define protection of rights in the face of new technological and shifting cultural norms. We are at the front lines of constantly balancing between the real time application of public safety measures and the rights of the public who may be impairing it. It takes a great deal of work. Witness the recent debates on the accessibility of data in personal smartphones.

"Empowering Arizona's prosecutors to administer justice and contribute to public safety through training and advocacy."

Even though we have brought criminal activity to record lows, there is still enough work to keep thousands of Arizona law enforcement officers and over 800 prosecutors over-employed, as funding levels for public works are never ideal. Even as crime rates fall, the sophistication of crimes is on the rise. We struggle to keep up, but are constantly researching, reviewing, training and adapting. This comes at a cost.

Yet, despite all our best efforts, and all the transparency (each case, it seems, is scrutinized by politicians, the public, defense attorneys, courts, the media and special interests) we endure the perennial criticism when we turn the proceeds of interdicting crime back into protecting our communities and compensating the victims. Every dollar is publically accounted for and openly dedicated to the specific needs of an improving public safety in that community. In some counties, people are appointed to prioritize those items, but regardless, in every jurisdiction there is accountability through the ballot box.

Would it really be any improvement to send this money to the legislature or some statewide group to make what should be local decisions about crime fighting priorities? More bureaucracy that defeats local control is contrary to the basic tenets of many of the critics of this process, but we prefer to attribute this kind of thinking to naiveté as opposed to hypocrisy.

But the simple fact offered in Part I remains the point: Every dollar we take from a criminal organization and turn back into resources to fight crime is a dollar that is not subtracted from education or health care. Who better to use those funds than those communities that achieve the highest aspirations of their government--assuring individual rights and public safety?-30-