



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PIMA COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE ANNOUNCES NEW UNIT TO FOCUS ON INVESTIGATING CLAIMS OF WRONGFUL CONVICTION

TUCSON, ARIZONA-Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall announced today the creation of the Pima County Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit. To protect the citizens of Pima County and to ensure justice, this new unit will address claims of actual innocence, and also seek to prevent wrongful convictions from occurring.

Deputy County Attorney Rick Unklesbay has been appointed Conviction Integrity Chief. As head of this new unit, Unklesbay will review and re-investigate cases that present a meaningful claim of actual innocence.

Mr. Unklesbay stated: "The mission of the Pima County Attorney's Office is to seek justice in every case that is prosecuted. It is regretful that from time to time, around the country, innocent men and women have been convicted of crimes they did not commit. This not only robs an innocent person of his or her freedom, it leaves a criminal on the street, free to commit more crimes."

In creating a Conviction Integrity Unit, County Attorney Barbara LaWall is joining a growing number of prosecutor offices across the country asking defense attorneys to work with prosecutors to ferret out potential wrongful convictions. These offices include: Dallas, Baltimore, Chicago, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia.

To date, the unit in Dallas had been involved in 33 exonerations. A unit in Santa Clara County, California has investigated and exonerated five people and the Manhattan unit has reviewed approximately 140 cases since its formation in 2010, reinvestigated at least 12 of the cases and consented to vacate convictions in three of those cases.

"This is absolutely the right thing to do," said Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall. "Prosecution must always be about integrity and the search for the truth, getting it right, not about just getting convictions. This is an important part of our efforts to ensure we are not locking up the wrong people. Rick Unklesbay is the right person to head this new unit. He's highly experienced, very smart, extremely thoughtful and well regarded by the defense bar."

Conviction Integrity Application Procedure:

In order for the Conviction Integrity Unit to carry out a review of a conviction, the following prerequisites must be met:

1. The conviction must have been in Pima County, Arizona;
2. There must be a claim of actual innocence. The Conviction Integrity Unit does not review non-innocence related claims, such as those concerning procedural errors at trial;

If a person wishes to have a conviction evaluated, please notify us in writing and include the following information:

- Defendant's name and CR case number
- What is the evidence of innocence?
- How would we be able to look further into that evidence?

Letters can be sent to the attention of Deputy County Attorney Rick Unklesbay, Conviction Integrity Chief, at the Pima County Attorney's Office, Legal Services Building, 32 N. Stone Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85701.

E-mails can be sent to Rick.Unklesbay@pcao.pima.gov Please put Conviction Integrity Application in the subject line.

NOTE: If the defendant is currently represented by counsel, all communications with the Conviction Integrity Unit must be made through the defendant's attorney.

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