

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/research/the-anatomy-of-discretion-podcast-2-of-4-interview-with-anne-j-swern>**

## Policy Issue Resources

This is the second in a four-part series discussing findings from The Anatomy of Discretion, a Vera Institute study of factors that influence prosecutors decisions in criminal cases. In this part, prosecutor Anne J. Swern discusses the effects of resource constraints. Swern is First Assistant District Attorney for Kings County, NY, and serves on the board of directors and the executive committee of the National District Attorneys Association. In other podcasts in this series, one of the studys authors summarizes its main findings; a federal judge discusses the balance between individualized treatment of defendants and consistency in decision making across similar cases; and a law professor discusses the balance between strength of evidence and other considerations.

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To truly tackle the devastating impact of the criminal legal system, we need politicians who have lived experience.

When I vote, I feel free. This past spring, passersby could read these words on a billboard at 1201 Half Street Southeast in Washington, DC. The billboard was a result of a national campaign by artist-led consortium For Freedoms, in which artists, activists, and prison reform organizations responded to the question: What does justice mean to you ...

Image courtesy of the #HALTsolitary Campaign. Seventeen people have died due to New York Citys abominable jails in 2022, surpassing last years total. Erick Tavira, 28, died by suicide on October 22 while being held in a mental health observation unit on Rikers Island. Mr. Taviras case underscores the inevitable outcome when incarceration is use ...

Lakisha Santana Sell used to bring her husband, David Sell, bags filled with mangoes, avocados, granola bars, and other healthy snacks when she visited him at Wende Correctional Facility in Alden, New York. Twice a month, she weighed out bags of food, careful not to exceed the 35-pound monthly maximum. But that tradition came to a halt this past ...

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