

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/publications/issues-if-consistency-in-the-federal-death-penalty-a-roundtable-discussion-on-the-role-of-the-u-s-attorney>**

## Policy Issue Resources

### Publication

U.S. Attorneys are the first line of decision makers in the process that identifies which cases may be subject to the federal death penalty. A Justice Department survey released in 2000 showed that since the mid-1990s, when the number federal death penalty-eligible crimes was greatly expanded, a disproportionate number of defendants considered for the sanction were minorities. The Vera Institute of Justice convened a roundtable of former U.S. Attorneys who served during the study period to discuss what role, if any, their decision making process played in the imbalance. This report draws on that discussion to examine the challenges prosecutors face in reconciling local conditions against nationwide laws that many considered unduly focused, for political reasons, on urban, drug-related crime.

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