

# California Legislature

February 6, 2023

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2/21/2023

The Honorable David Alvarez  
Chair, Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 107  
Sacramento, CA 95814

FEB 06 2023

Dear Assemblymember Alvarez,

We, the undersigned, ask that the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) approve this request to audit Proposition 47 (Prop 47) and its effectiveness in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Prop 47, approved by the California voters in 2014 by a 60% to 40% vote, categorized some nonviolent offenses as misdemeanors, rather than felonies. Some of the crimes affected were: shoplifting, grand theft, receiving stolen property, forgery, fraud, writing a bad check, personal use of most illegal drugs.

The measure made it so prosecutors cannot charge a person with a felony, if the amount in these reclassified crimes was under \$950. In the years since its passage, critics have cited this measure as the sole reason for the increase in violent crimes and property crimes in California. In 2015, the Los Angeles Times reported that law enforcement officials and others have blamed Prop 47 for allowing repeat offenders to break the law with little consequence. However, supporters of Prop 47 have stated otherwise.

In December 2021, a Sacramento Bee article cited California Retailers Association President and CEO Rachel Michelin as stating Prop 47 as "raising it (retail crime) to a whole new level." Other critics, such as Sacramento County Sheriff and former Assemblymember Jim Cooper say "Shoplifting has been decriminalized, so it's underreported. They're not going to file a report. Police don't respond."

It is time to review the effectiveness of Prop 47 to determine whether it has escalated crime rates and if so, which or all crime categories have been affected, and whether there have been any decreases in recidivism. Another criticism of Prop 47 is that it has led to underreporting of misdemeanor crimes. Is it possible to assess whether underreporting has increased since the measure took effect? Therefore, we request that the State Auditor's Office conduct an audit regarding Proposition 47. We ask for the audit include the following in the scope of work and other items the auditors may find relevant:

- Obtain and assess statistics regarding Prop 47 crimes pre-2014 and post-2014 for Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.
- Assess the impact of COVID-era public safety policies on crime statistics.



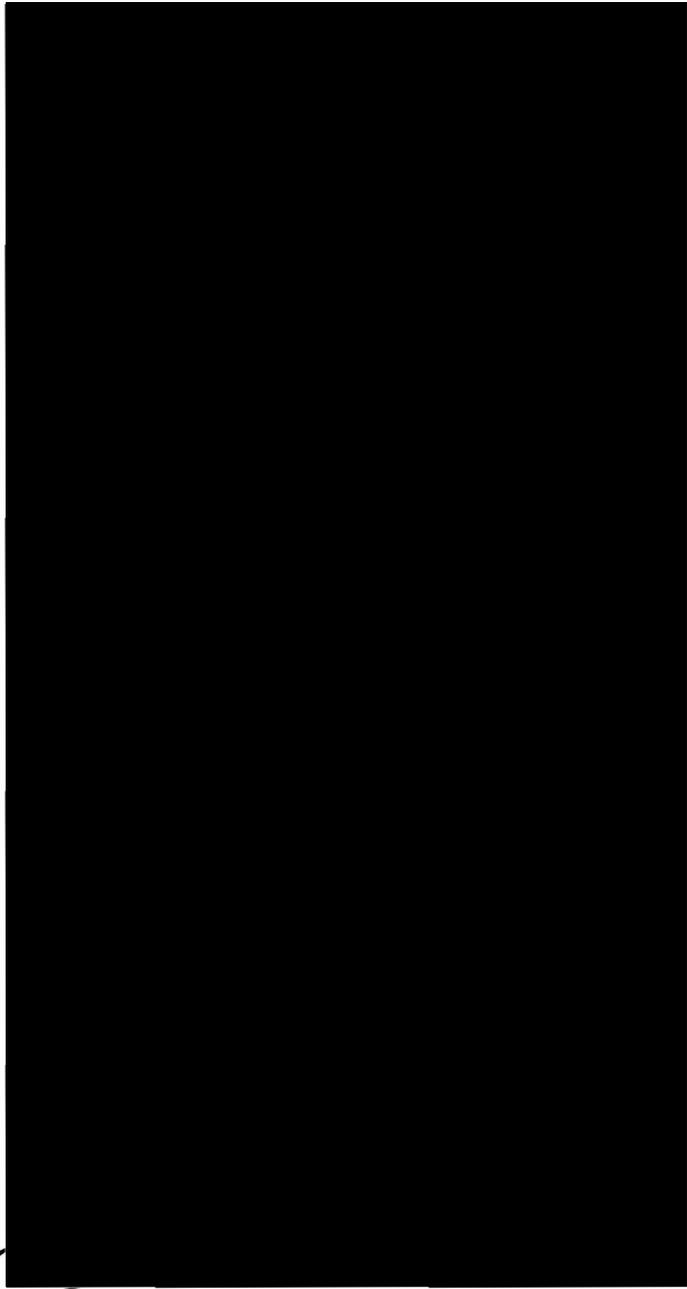
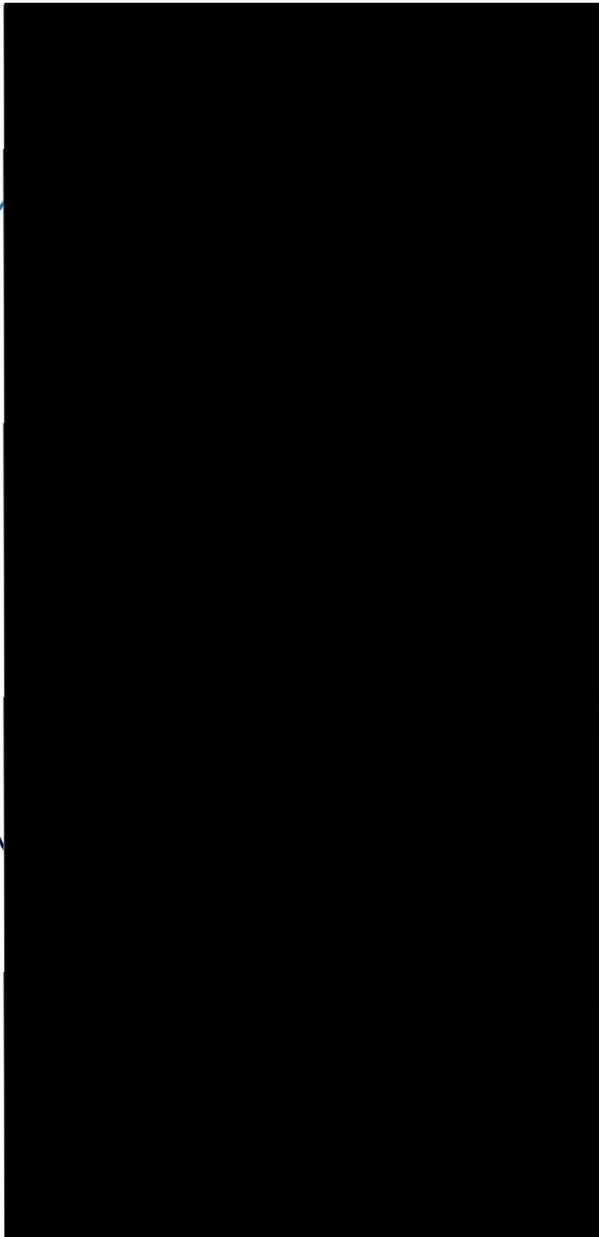
- Determine whether crime rates (reported and unreported) and recidivism rates in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties have increased or decreased since the passage of Prop 47.

We respectfully request that you approve this audit of Prop 47 as detailed above. If approved, I ask that the State Auditor's Office begin this audit as soon as possible. If you have any questions please contact my Legislative Director, Michael Chen, at [Michael.Chen@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Michael.Chen@asm.ca.gov) or (916) 319-2045.

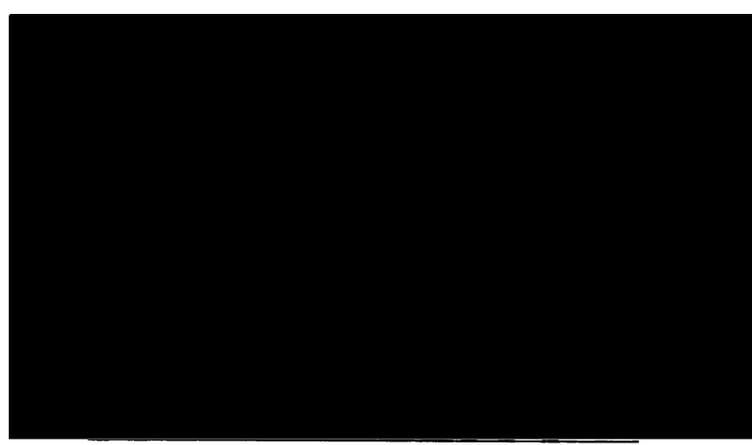
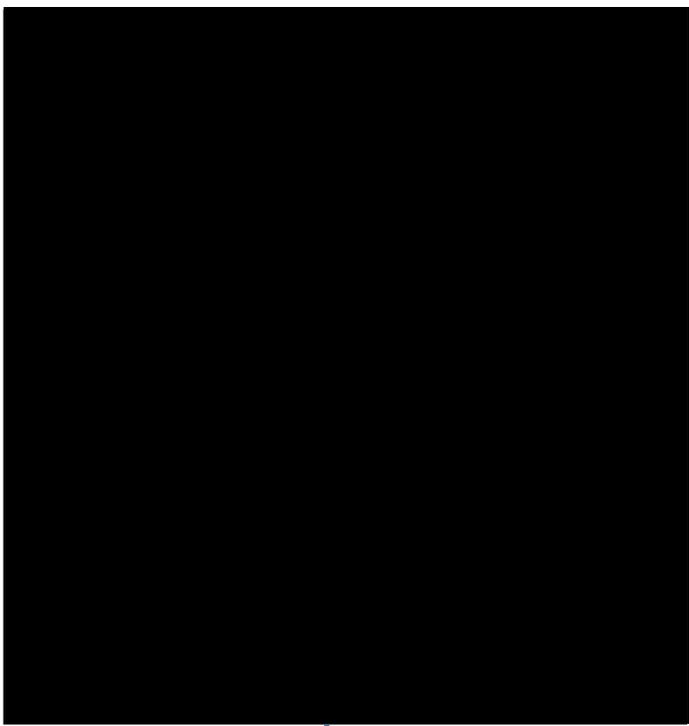
Sincerely,



James C. Ramos  
Assemblymember, 45<sup>th</sup> District



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