



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)  
www.OANA-NY.org

Nov 18.2022

## Another Aspect of Justice Reform

Crime and safety have become one of the top issues in America today.

In recent years some of the tools used to combat that crime have also proven to have negative consequences. There are issues with both our law enforcement and jail facilities, and there are many instances of reform being proposed and instituted with varying degrees of success.

But too many instances of extended stays for those who were only charged, and not convicted have led to deaths and mental health consequences. And because of this, solutions like reducing the use of cash bail, closing or reforming existing jails, and constructing new facilities for detention on each borough have been instituted. Each can play a role in developing a fair and equitable justice system.

However, OANA feels that these solutions do not address one core problem our justice system faces today. These are not long-term solutions.

What is not addressed is our courts, the lynchpin of our entire justice system. The Constitution's 6<sup>th</sup> amendment calls for the right for speedy and public trial, and for some reason this has been ignored...

No one should EVER be incarcerated without conviction for an extended period of time. When the public hears of people being held for years without trial (this is what you expect in dictatorships, not in a constitutional democracy), it creates a breakdown in trust in the system.

We need to make our justice system more efficient and time sensitive. Not only will this meet Constitutional requirements, it will also address overcrowding and reduce the need for more facilities. By moving people quickly in and out of the detention facility we eliminate the need to warehouse people, leading to less space needed, less operational costs like food, laundry, etc., and fewer Corrections Officers.



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)  
www.OANA-NY.org

Today, our court system is pushed to the limit. The backlog of cases is nothing short of a major scandal.

Today's courts are known for an overworked inefficient process that does not meet even minimal standards. We need to invest in new, expanded Court Facilities, greatly increase the number of Judges, Staff, District Attorneys and Public Defenders, analyze the system to see where efficiencies can be introduced by instituting use of technology, and reexamine the management and laws governing our court system. Today instead of building more jails for incarceration let us instead invest in a modern, fair and just court system.

Recently the court backlog in Queens is so great that cases are now being tried in the Borough President's facilities due to lack of available space.

We should also look at the way we elect our judges, and make sure comprehensive histories, philosophies, qualifications, and endorsements of candidates are easily available to voters. How else can voters make intelligent decisions that can help heal our justice system.

Only then can we ensure our constitutional responsibilities for a speedy trial will be met, and with it the quality of life and freedom from fear we all deserve.

Current solutions, whether more cops, defund the police, build more jails, remove bail requirements stand little chance of succeeding without an efficient and fair court system. We hope everyone can get behind expanding and reforming our courts.