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Andrew Warren Proposes Creation of Conviction Integrity Unit to Review Questionable Convictions by State Attorney's Office

Tampa, FL – On Thursday, Andrew Warren released a new proposal to create a specialized Conviction Integrity Unit within the State Attorney's Office to review questionable convictions in order to exonerate innocent defendants. A Conviction Integrity Unit ("CIU"), also known as a Conviction Review Unit, is a division of a prosecutor's office that works to identify and remedy wrongful convictions by conducting fact-based reviews of secured convictions.

"A prosecutor's job is to seek justice, not to obtain convictions," Warren said. "Wrongful convictions are contrary to the very fiber of our criminal justice system. They punish innocents while the actual perpetrators go free, undermining the integrity of our system and do not keep our families safe."

CIUs investigate plausible allegations of innocence following a defendant's conviction. They involve a screening process followed by a comprehensive review of the underlying crime, investigation, and judicial proceeding. The CIU's review focuses on common aspects of wrongful convictions, such as DNA testing in cases where DNA or other forensic evidence was not used, faulty eyewitness identification, questionable confessions, changed witness testimony, and prosecutorial misconduct. CIUs also provide enhanced training to prosecutors and investigators to help avoid the pitfalls that can lead to wrongful convictions.

"Despite our Constitutional and procedural safeguards and the best efforts of prosecutors and investigators, the fact remains that wrongful convictions unfortunately exist," Warren explained. "Because a prosecutor's job does not simply end with conviction, Conviction Integrity Units are a critical and necessary component of any prosecutor's office."

Conviction Integrity Units have become commonplace in prosecutors' offices over the past decade. As of December 2015, nearly 30 such units existed in major cities across the country, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Cleveland.^[1] The State Attorney's Office for Hillsborough County, however, has no such unit.

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The American Bar Association has emphasized the importance of leadership in the creation and effectiveness of CIUs, explaining: "Change comes from the top It cannot be overstated how important the support of the elected [state] attorney is to the success of the integrity/review unit."^[2] Warren strongly agreed. "The public deserves and justice requires State Attorneys who look beyond conviction rates, who are committed to using proven methods like CIUs to exonerate innocent defendants and prosecute the actual offender to keep our neighborhoods safe."

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[1] "[Conviction Review Units: A National Perspective](#)," University of Pennsylvania Law School at 7, 15 (April 2016).

[2] "[Conviction Integrity Review Units](#)," American Bar Association (Summer 2016).

Political advertisement paid for and approved by
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