



## Pennsylvania Innocence Project Parlance for Policy Powwows

Avoid	Use
Reform	Updates
Police Misconduct	Increasing Professionalism
Prosecutorial Misconduct	Improving training
Dark ages	Best Practices
Focusing on past issues	Justice & Fairness
Death penalty	Reliability and Accuracy of evidence

### General thoughts on discussing these propositions:

- 1) Emphasize that for every wrongly convicted individual, there is an actual perpetrator who has escaped justice.
- 2) Police have been following the practices they have developed based upon their experiences and needs in the field. The updates proposed are developed based upon principles derived from 30 years of social science research.
- 3) It's not a matter of blaming police or prosecutors, but adapting law enforcement and investigations to modern best practices.
- 4) Law enforcement officers are entitled to the same amount of training and best available methods as any other profession.
- 5) When discussing potential compensation issues, emphasize that we support legislation that would re-activate victims' services in tandem with an exoneration.
  - Victims go through terrible trauma when faced with re-opening of old wounds,
  - Victims' trust in the system often falls after learning the one they thought had committed the crime was locked away and that the actual perpetrator may still be at large.
  - Victims often feel guilt over having convicted the wrong individual.
  - It is never about blaming the victim; the victims are simply doing the best they can.

## The Pennsylvania Innocence Project

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- 6) Also on compensation, remind your listener how much an exoneree loses by being improperly incarcerated:
  - Possibility of developing career and job experience
  - Meeting the love of his life and having children
  - Often parents and siblings have died
  
- 7) You will likely need to remind people that the Pennsylvania Innocence Project is not the same as the Innocence Project in New York. There is a great deal of animosity out there toward the New York Project, predominantly tied to Barry Scheck's work on the OJ Simpson case. Emphasize that
  - the Pennsylvania Innocence Project is an independent non-profit organization;
  - we are not directly tied to the New York project;
  - our goal is the improvement of the criminal justice system to assure that the guilty are convicted and the innocent go free;
  - The Pennsylvania Innocence Project emphasizes neutrality;
  - we don't take a position on the death penalty;
  - we seek to work with law enforcement to ensure best practices are followed and that they have the support they need to conduct their investigations properly.
  
- 8) When in doubt, remember that we strive to be perceived as not on either side of the bar, but a protector of the system. It's not about blaming police or prosecutors, but ensuring that known best practices can be followed by all participants to assure that the system works in the fairest way it can.
  
- 9) Preservation of evidence goes as far to solving cold cases as it does to ensuring that past convictions can be examined.
  
- 10) The only person who benefits from a mistaken conviction is the actual perpetrator. When an investigation goes off track, critical time is lost in pursuing the true guilty party.
  
- 11) Our society needs to feel safe, and that the system is reliable and accurate. When an innocent person is convicted, often the actual perpetrator victimizes more citizens. We know that actual criminals have been convicted of more than 60 sexual assaults and 20 murders before being caught on another crime. And those are just convictions.
  
- 12) DNA exonerations are only a tip of the iceberg, as criminalists estimate that DNA is only present in 10-17% of all serious felony cases. Non-DNA cases involve the same potential for wrongful conviction—eyewitness misidentification, forensic science inaccuracies, false confessions, misuse of government informants—as DNA cases do.