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Solicitor Scarlett Wilson Announces Unprecedented Project Collecting Decision-Making Data

Charleston, SC— Building on her Transparency Initiative of 2019, Solicitor Scarlett A. Wilson announces an unprecedented partnership with [Justice Innovation Lab \(JIL\)](#) and researchers from Loyola University at Chicago, the George Washington University Law School, the Toulouse School of Economics and the [Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation](#) at Georgetown University.

In early 2015, Solicitor Wilson began improving data collection at the [Ninth Circuit Solicitor's Office](#) in order to better identify and understand racial disparities in her office. Solicitor Wilson committed herself to correcting root causes of any disparities in her jurisdiction, and to ensure that her prosecutors made fair and consistent decisions.

Once establishing processes for collecting data, Solicitor Wilson needed experts to measure and analyze the data. Solicitor Wilson stated, “With these partnerships and these experts, we are poised to lead the country and detecting and correcting bias. This sort of accountability will not only help the public, but the criminal justice system as a whole. We know that unconscious bias runs deep in every corner of this country – and we believe that this study will help identify and correct our own biases. Studies have shown bias in basically every other government institution: education, banking, health care and housing. The real shame would not be discovering that we have unconscious biases in our criminal justice system. The shame would be in not doing all we can to eliminate bias — implicit or otherwise.”

Jared Fishman, Founder and Executive Director of Justice Innovation Lab, stated, “Prosecutors play a vital role in ensuring that justice is done in their communities. And yet, most prosecutors across the United States are still making crucial decisions based on “gut” and personal experience instead of data and clear guidelines. Inevitably, this leads to biases in decision-making. Solicitor Wilson wants her prosecutors to do better and we can help her with that. A data-informed process empowers prosecutors to make fairer decisions. You can't fix what you don't measure. We chose to work with Solicitor Wilson because she has taken extraordinary steps to see that data is collected at every decision point in her office. She is committed to changing the old ways of the system and ensuring a fairer process so that true justice is done.” Fishman is a 14-year veteran of the U.S. Department of Justice, where he led civil rights prosecutions on police misconduct, as well as prosecutions of hate crimes and human trafficking in over 20 jurisdictions across the United States.

JIL will analyze existing data to identify structural inequalities in the system, by evaluating the office's performance on key criminal justice metrics, such as identifying racial disparities in pleas, sentences, and dismissals. Following the initial analysis, JIL will work closely with the Solicitor's Office to design policy



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interventions to improve performance on these metrics, with the goal of improving the overall fairness of prosecutorial decision-making. In the process, JIL will document the results of interventions and publish reports on its findings, so that community members and other prosecutors' offices can learn from the process.

Don Stemen, Associate Professor and Chairperson for the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Loyola University at Chicago stated, "We are excited to help analyze the data Solicitor Wilson has already collected and are impressed with some of the newer features she is working on. Tracking trial continuances and creating the "Plea Negotiation Portal" to track the plea process from start to finish hasn't been done in other jurisdictions. This information will provide valuable insight for Charleston and Berkeley Counties and will undoubtedly be encouraged in other parts of the country."

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