



CALIFORNIA JUDGES ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Judiciary

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FAIR AND IMPARTIAL COURTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR DEMOCRACY

(SACRAMENTO, CA – JUNE 22, 2016) Recently, individual judges have been subjected to fierce criticism, and some threats, from members of the public. The denunciation of Judge Aaron Persky's sentencing decision in the Brock Turner case is but one example. Judicial officers must keep an open mind, consider only the evidence introduced in the courtroom, and apply the law to the unique circumstances of each case. Our fundamental rights depend on their ability to fulfill this constitutional duty.

Fair and impartial courts have always been an essential protection in our democracy. On a daily basis, the courts resolve our most significant disputes involving life, liberty and property. Although the rules of judicial ethics prohibit judges from publicly commenting on pending court proceedings, judges are allowed to educate the public about the administration of justice. The California Judges Association, which represents over 2,200 active and retired California judicial officers, issues this statement to reaffirm the important role our courts play in ensuring our rights.

If a party believes a judge made a wrong decision, that party may appeal the decision. It does harm to our constitutional system, however, to place judges in fear of recall or personal harm before making unpopular decisions that comply with the law. A judge should not be influenced by voices in the community, no matter how communicated, who demand a particular outcome. Our liberty and fundamental rights will be at risk if judges believe they

must be more concerned with public reaction than with the fair and impartial application of the law.

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