To: Interested Parties  
From: The Justice Collaborative Institute  
Re: Gunnigle Leads Maricopa County Attorney Race As Voters Trust Her On Priority Reforms  
Date: 10/28/2020

In the race for Maricopa County Attorney between Democrat Julie Gunnigle and Republican Allister Adel, both candidates have claimed the mantle of “reformer,” as polls consistently show broad support for policies that will reduce Arizona’s reliance on prisons and hold police officers accountable for misconduct. In the state’s most populous county, appearing to be the most “tough on crime” is no longer a winning strategy for elected prosecutors.

But who do voters trust more on the reform policies they see as most important?

New polling provides some answers. Between October 22 and October 25, The Justice Collaborative Institute polled 628 registered voters in Maricopa County, weighing the survey to reflect registered voters on race and ethnicity, gender, age, and educational attainment. Overall, Gunnigle holds a 38% to 32% lead over the incumbent Allister Adel, including a 28%-22% lead among independent voters.

Results from this poll also show that voters overwhelmingly support progressive criminal justice reforms, and voters trust Gunnigle more than Adel to implement these popular reforms.

Our results show:

- Police accountability remains a critical priority for Maricopa County voters: 83% of voters, including 81% of Republicans, say that it’s important for the next County Attorney to hold police accountable for their actions. In addition, 65% of voters, including 53% of Republicans, say it’s important for the next county attorney to support efforts to enhance civilian review and control of the Phoenix police department.
- 37% of voters trust Gunnigle more to hold police accountable, compared to 29% who trust Adel more, an 8 point delta. Adel has been endorsed by the Phoenix police union and as the current county attorney has declined to charge police officers for killing civilians in several instances.

- Most voters say it’s important to treat kids like kids: 52% of voters say it’s important to not charge children as adults whenever prosecutors have discretion, while only 16% say it’s not important.

- 33% of voters trust Gunnigle more to use this discretion, compared to 28% who trust Adel more.

- Voters oppose harsh sentence enhancements for non-violent crimes: 64% of voters, including 58% of Republicans, say it’s important that prosecutors not seek extra punishment in the form of sentence enhancements for non-violent offenses, while only 9% say it’s not important, a massive delta of 55 points.

- 36% of voters trust Gunnigle more to not seek these enhancements, compared to 27% who trust Adel more.

- Most voters want the next county attorney to support marijauna legalization: 54% of county voters say it’s important that the county attorney support marijuana legalization. This is in addition to other recent polling showing that Maricopa County voters would be more likely to support a county attorney candidate if she supported ending the prosecution of marijuana possession offenses, commuting sentences currently being served for marijuana possession, and expunging previously convicted possession convictions.

- 34% trust Gunnigle more to support legalization, compared to 24% who trust Adel more. Gunnigle has encouraged people to vote for Prop. 207, the state ballot initiative that would allow adults to legally purchase and possess certain amounts of marijuana, and has pledged to end prosecution of personal marijuana possession and expunge past convictions, while Adel has not made similar commitments.

Additionally, in the Maricopa County Sheriff’s race between Democrat Paul Penzone and Republican Jerry Sheridan, Penzone leads by double digits. According to our polling, Penzone leads 47% to 33%.

Polling Methodology

Between October 22 and October 25, The Justice Collaborative Institute polled N=1,007 registered voters in Arizona, including n=628 registered voters in Maricopa County. The survey
included n=874 likely voters and voters who have already voted. The survey was weighted to be reflective of registered voters in Arizona and Maricopa County on race and ethnicity, gender, age, region of the state, and educational attainment. The survey was fielded online, took on average 7 minutes to complete, and has a confidence interval of 3.11% at the 95% level among registered voters statewide and 3.92% in Maricopa County.