

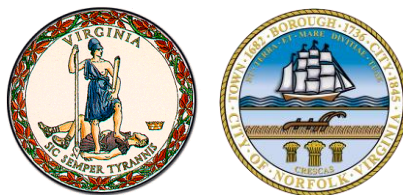
Commonwealth's Attorney
Ramin Fatehi

Chief Deputy
Commonwealth's Attorney
Krista L. Fulton

Deputy
Commonwealth's Attorneys
Karen J. Burrell
Cynthia D. Collard
K. Scott Miles

Director of the
Victim/Witness
Assistance Program
Lakresha D. Boyd

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY CITY OF NORFOLK

800 East City Hall Avenue • Suite 600 • Norfolk • Virginia • 23510-2719
Phone: (757) 664-4444 • Fax: (757) 664-4445 • Norfolk Family Justice Center: (757) 330-0376
<http://www.norfolk.gov/commatty> • <http://www.facebook.com/NorfolkCWA> • @NorfolkCWA

Senior Assistant
Commonwealth's Attorneys
Shavaughn N. Banks
Joshua L. Jenkins
Andrew Kolp
William S. Maydosz
Michelle L. Newkirk
Gregory B. Turpin
Gordon C. Ufkes

Director of Communications
Nia Y. Tariq

Comptroller
Alice K. Allred

Director of
Information Technology
Christopher J. Beason

STATEMENT OF COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY RAMIN FATEHI REGARDING "OPERATION BOLD BLUE LINE"

Earlier today Governor Youngkin, Lieutenant Governor Sears, and Attorney General Miyares came to Norfolk to make a series of announcements that they claim will address or reduce violence in twelve Virginia cities, including Norfolk.

Several of my fellow elected Commonwealth's Attorneys and I received invitations to attend this event, but despite multiple requests from prosecutors, including me, for details, we received no meaningful information in advance. While the announcement of "Operation Bold Blue Line" contains many promises, we must wait and see how the Governor and Attorney General propose to keep them.

I am heartened to hear the Governor and Attorney General announce efforts to address the ongoing shortage of law-enforcement officers around the Commonwealth.

I am also heartened to learn of a possible effort [to fund Virginia's unfunded Witness Protection Program](#), an initiative I have championed for over a year [along with Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano](#), Portsmouth Commonwealth's Attorney Stephanie Morales, and other progressive prosecutors. This is the same initiative that House Minority Leader Don Scott to fund earlier this year and that the Republican House chose not to fund.

Should the Governor and General Assembly fund the Virginia Witness Protection Program, it has the promise to make a real difference in the effective prosecution of violent-crime cases, and I will applaud them for it. But first we must see them meaningfully keep the promises they have made.

I am disappointed but unsurprised to hear the Governor and Attorney General try once again to pit prosecutors against police by deploying time-worn, divisive rhetoric regarding prosecutors "unwilling" to punish violent crime. I know of no prosecutor in Virginia unwilling to do so; progressive prosecutors like me believe in focusing our resources on addressing and prosecuting violence. I have focused on violent crime every day since I took office.

Unfortunately, the Governor's plan to hire Assistant Attorneys General to serve as Special Assistant United States Attorneys (SAUSAs) has the potential to harm the effort to fight violence.

I believe in federal prosecution; I have served as a SAUSA myself, and I employ one of the only SAUSAs currently working in Virginia. But in this era of critically understaffed prosecutors' offices—with approximately one third of Commonwealth's Attorneys across Virginia struggling to fill vacant positions—a move to hire prosecutors into the Attorney General's Office will strip experienced trial lawyers out of local offices where elected Commonwealth's Attorneys need them most. In fact, the Attorney General's Office was soliciting applications from local prosecutors just last week at a state gang-investigator conference

Rather than poach talent out of local prosecutors' offices, I urge the Governor and Attorney General to support the full funding of Commonwealth's Attorney's Offices as they did for police, both to satisfy a decades-long underfunding of our felony prosecution obligations and to amend Virginia law to require and fund local prosecutors to be involved in misdemeanor prosecutions.

There is no single or simple solution that will "solve" the problem of violence in our communities. I look forward to seeing what actions will follow today's words, which will determine whether today's press conference was the beginning of a serious effort or merely an election-season branding exercise. I hope for results but will wait to see.

In the meantime, the prosecutors and staff in my office will continue to keep my promises to the citizens of Norfolk to protect their safety and to honor their civil rights, every day.

#####