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June 27, 2025

The Wisconsin District Attorneys' Association is proud to announce the selection of the following recipients of the 2024 Prosecutor of the Year Awards in their respective category:

District Attorney of the Year: Eric Toney, Fond du Lac County: Nominated by City of Fond du Lac Chief of Police Aaron Goldstein who said:

I am proudly nominating Eric Toney for District Attorney of the year. Under Eric's leadership he has demonstrated exceptional dedication and integrity in the pursuit of justice. Eric's leadership in handling major cases, understanding of the law and ability to navigate our complex cases is truly impressive. The successful convictions we have achieved are a testament to his expertise and commitment to our community. Eric has shown remarkable compassion for our victims while still being relentless with persuasive arguments to bring offenders to justice and hold those who choose to put our community at risk responsible for their criminal actions here. Simply stated Eric Toney instills confidence in our criminal justice legal system here.

Eric also actively engages with our community through our community engagement events. For example, he participated as a dunk tank candidate at our 2024 National Night Out event and had a lot of fun interacting with our community while constantly getting submerged in the water. Eric's community engagement fosters trust and collaboration between law enforcement and community members.

Chief Goldstein elaborated in his nomination by commenting on difficult homicide cases DA Toney successfully prosecuted while also successfully overcoming a serious heart condition that left him hospitalized but undeterred in his pursuit of justice for victims.

In addition, the selection committee noted that Eric Toney was instrumental in successfully advocating for additional prosecutor positions and pay progression for Assistant District Attorneys while President of the Wisconsin District Attorneys' Association and while continuing as a Board member for nearly a decade.

District Attorney Eric Toney responded:

"I'm honored to have received the 2024 District Attorney of the Year award from my colleagues, especially after the challenging year 2023 brought, with unexpected open-heart surgery. I'll continue to fight for justice while also advocating for health and wellness. I'm incredibly proud of our team and my role in helping secure a significant budget for prosecutors and public defenders that has made a difference across Wisconsin. Ultimately, this award is a testament to the incredible team in my office and the amazing law enforcement partners we work with every day."



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Deputy District Attorney of the Year: Rebecca Meyer, Sheboygan County: Marquette, 2020. Nominated by ADA Hannah Koniar who cited Rebecca's commitment to the attorneys in the office and the support staff, encouraging comradery in and out of the office. In addition, the selection committee recognized Rebecca for her tenacity in continuing to work in a supervisory capacity even with a high turnover of attorneys in prosecutor offices and the added burden that creates for others in the office.

Rebecca says: "I want to thank the staff in the Sheboygan County District Attorney's office for all their hard work and continuing dedication to justice. I also would like to thank my husband for always being there."



Assistant District Attorney of the Year: Nick Heitman, Milwaukee County, 2009 graduate of Marquette University Law School. Nominated by Victim Witness Specialist Kristin Raymond who worked with Nick for more than a decade in the Domestic Violence Unit. Nick was described as a consummate prosecutor who worked tirelessly seeking justice for victims despite threats to himself and his family. Nick was described as an incredibly knowledgeable trial attorney who also possesses tremendous institutional knowledge and is a valuable asset to the office and especially newer ADAs. While Nick is moving on from the Domestic Violence Unit, he will continue encourage his colleagues in the Public Integrity Unit.

Nick Heitman said "I would really like to thank the support staff and John Chisholm, Kent Lovern, and my walking buddies for putting up with me all these years."



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Rising Star: Claire Roehre, Milwaukee County: Graduate of Valparaiso University School of Law. Nominated by ADAs Joy Hammond and Gilbert Urfer who state:

She comes early and stays late and has shown an unending commitment to serving both the victims and the justice involved youth. As a former social worker, Claire brings a unique perspective and understanding of the defendants. She understands the important balance between justice for the victims and effective treatment of our juvenile offenders and knows how to advocate for both. She has that combination of drive, commitment and sound judgement that makes an outstanding career prosecutor.

In 2024, ADA Roehre fully grew into her role as a leader in the unit and in the office. Her expertise has grown to the point that she routinely fields questions from other prosecutors' offices on delinquency matters. As our Team Captain, she also leads by example, providing case coverage for her team members and acting as backup charging support when the number of new referrals threatens to overwhelm the unit. In the past five years, ADA Roehre has progressed from a new ADA just learning the ropes to a respected leader in the office and an expert in juvenile law. She achieved this all while maintaining a tremendous workload and increasing the level of her responsibilities and the complexity of the cases she prosecutes.

Clair Roehre responded: "It takes a village to raise an ADA and I'm forever grateful to have landed in the delinquency unit within the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office where the collective knowledge spans well over 40 years of experience. Endless thanks to my team for answering the many, *many* questions I've had over the years. Without their willingness to listen and support, I would not be the attorney I am today. I am proud of the work we do every day in assessing the needs of the juveniles who enter the juvenile justice system while also ensuring the needs of the victim are met."



Community Engagement Award: Joy Hammond, Milwaukee County: 1997 graduate of Syracuse University College of Law. Nominated by Ruth Ehr Gott of Enough is Enough who said:

Joy Hammond consistently goes above and beyond her duties as a prosecutor, demonstrating an exceptional commitment to justice and community safety. She has been a steadfast supporter of our Court Watch program, always available to facilitate introductions and serve as a sounding board. Even while recovering from surgery, she continued her work without missing a beat—a testament to her dedication and resilience. In court, Joy exemplifies professionalism and fairness, earning respect from defense attorneys, colleagues, and judges alike. She goes out of her way to foster these professional relationships, which has strengthened her ability to advocate effectively within the justice system. Beyond her courtroom responsibilities, Joy has shown a remarkable commitment to community engagement, particularly in addressing the reckless driving epidemic.

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She is proactive in working with youth, helping to provide them with the tools they need to succeed and avoid the criminal justice system. Her positive impact on both the justice system and the community makes her exceptionally deserving of the Prosecutor of the Year honor.

Joy was also nominated by two others outside her office for her work as a prosecutor.

Joy Hammond responded: "The award was made sweeter when I learned that I had been nominated by the community group Enough is Enough, who work selflessly in the name of a young woman killed by a fleeing driver. They show up every day – an unpaid full-time job – observing sentencing hearings to make a difference in their community. I am truly blessed with the best job in the office and the support from office leadership that allows us to be creative and truly serve our community."



Lifetime Achievement Award: David O'Leary, Recently retired from Rock County: 1988 graduate of Marquette Law School. Nominated by ADA (now DA) Jason Sanders who said, in part:

For 28 years David O'Leary has been excellent at an insanely difficult job. The introspective and value-driven among us are constantly asking ourselves the hard questions: what's the line between tough and excessive; the line between smart and soft; the balance that responds to movements and activism from our community, while simultaneously protecting that same community? That enlightened "middle path" has been David's calling card, and maintaining public safety and order while simultaneously embracing decades of change is his legacy.

Rock County has been simultaneously at or near the forefront of violent crime and criminal justice reform for David's entire tenure. We were one of the first counties to offer deferred prosecution agreements and implement treatment courts; we were the first county to have special treatment court for military veterans; we are currently one of the pilot counties for a number of Evidence Based Decision Making (EBDM) programs. I ask you to consider how many of those ideas actually get done if the District Attorney is only willing to listen, as opposed to David, who was willing to put in the work, advocate for change, and even served as Chair of the statewide EBDM committee. And then I ask to consider how many of those ideas actually get done if the District Attorney isn't also putting in the work to protect the community and be tough on violent and dangerous criminals?

When a man personally sits in weeks of homicide trials to ensure that a killer goes to prison for decades-if-not-life, it is difficult for someone to call him "soft on crime." Which is why he managed to get the serious sentences while simultaneously shepherding in all the growth. Which is why our community has been blessed to have him. Put simply: he is a linchpin, and if you pull him out, decades of community justice reforms (many of which we now consider foundational) would either wither, or crumble entirely to dust. I wish I had more time to put together this application as a package, because I would love to go back and make contact with all the law

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enforcement officers, all the prosecutors, and all the victims (and defendants!) who have worked with or benefitted from David in the last 28 years. Not only would it make a more compelling narrative, but I suspect it might flesh out for the committee more about who David is. Because it is difficult to get to know the man who is simultaneously imposing and unassuming, simultaneously tough and kind, and simultaneously the reason why some murderers will die in prison and some citizens will live their lives – having overcome their mistake – without a criminal record.

But even without that, I hope that these words can highlight that which common sense should tell you: that nobody can be District Attorney...without vision, insight, and an almost preternatural ability to shepherd. I do not know what Rock County looks like in an alternate universe wherein David O'Leary never runs for District Attorney, but I promise you it is considerably different, and I suggest it is notably worse. But personally, I truly believe that David O'Leary is in a small and elite tier of most important people in our county this century. He has served us all for 28 years, and deserves some small acknowledgement of gratitude from his people.

Quote from **Retired DA David O'Leary**: "It was a great honor to be recognized for my 28 years as the Rock County District Attorney. I am grateful to the wonderful staff who have devoted their careers to making Rock County a safer place to live."

