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## DA Stephan Testifies Before U.S. House Committee on Crime, Updates Congress on National Threat of Organized Retail Crime

### *DA Urged Passage of the Combatting Organized Retail Crime Act*

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) testified before Congress today for the second time this year, addressing the Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance within the House Judiciary Committee. During her remarks, the DA provided a snapshot of how organized retail crime has evolved in the last few years, including an update on progress being made in San Diego County under Proposition 36.

“Organized retail crime is not a victimless offense,” Stephan told lawmakers. “It harms workers, consumers, small businesses, and entire communities. It undermines public safety and erodes confidence in the rule of law.”

**EDITORS:** [Watch DA Stephan’s testimony here.](#)

DA Stephan urged Congressional action to combat the growing threat of organized retail crime (ORC) and transnational theft networks that are harming communities and businesses across the nation with commercial and residential thefts and burglaries. DA Stephan was called to testify for her expertise in combatting these types of crimes in San Diego County.

Stephan cited national data estimating that U.S. retailers lost \$45 billion to theft in 2024, with losses projected to exceed \$53 billion by 2027. She emphasized that organized theft contributes to store closures, job losses, higher consumer prices, and increased violence against retail employees.

In San Diego County alone, the DA’s Office has filed organized retail theft cases against 336 defendants over a three-year period, resulting in more than \$3.2 million in documented losses and significant prison and jail sentences for convicted offenders.

Stephan’s testimony highlighted numerous cases involving coordinated “flash mob” thefts, multi-state retail burglary rings, and transnational criminal organizations — including South

American Theft Groups (SATGs) — responsible for high-end residential burglaries and large-scale commercial thefts with stolen goods shipped overseas.

Stephan pointed to California’s recent legal reforms, including voter-approved Proposition 36, which strengthened penalties for habitual theft and expanded prosecutors’ ability to aggregate thefts across locations and time periods. These changes have allowed law enforcement to better target organized criminal networks rather than treating theft as isolated incidents.

“Our experience in California shows that strong, clear laws combined with collaboration work,” Stephan said. “Prop 36 has made a real difference to local businesses and prosecuting these habitual offenders is making stores and the community safer. By emphasizing accountability alongside treatment and rehabilitation, data also shows that Prop 36 is working to address the core drivers of habitual criminal behavior. This kind of reform can serve as a model for the nation.”

District Attorney Stephan voiced strong support for the bipartisan Combating Organized Retail Crime Act, which would expand federal enforcement tools and create a national Organized Retail Crime Coordination Center. She emphasized that organized theft rings routinely cross city, county, state, and international borders — making federal coordination essential.

She also highlighted the need for improved data-sharing, stronger public-private partnerships, and public awareness campaigns to reduce the resale of stolen goods online and in informal markets.

In addition to retail theft, Stephan addressed fraud-based crimes such as gift card scams and elder fraud, noting that San Diego County alone recorded \$149 million in elder scam losses in one year. She stressed that integrated national data systems could expose connections between organized theft and fraud networks operating simultaneously.

“Restoring the rule of law means accountability that fits the crime,” Stephan said. “We must distinguish between minor offenses and sophisticated criminal enterprises that prey on consumers and businesses alike.”

District Attorney Stephan reaffirmed her office’s commitment to working with Congress, law enforcement, retailers, and community partners to combat organized crime.

“We stand ready to assist in strengthening laws and resources to protect our communities, our businesses, and our consumers,” she said. “Together, we can meet this challenge and ensure justice is served.”

Also testifying at today’s hearing were Scott McBride, Chief Global Asset Protection Officer & Chief Security Officer, American Eagle Inc.; Chris Spear, President and CEO, American Trucking Association; and Shane Bennett, Principal of Cyber Defense for Theft, Fraud & Abuse, Target.

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*About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office*

*The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*

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