



MERCURY NEWS: Prop 36 Fails to Deliver on Promise to Voters

Early indicators suggest Prop 36 is falling short of its promise to deliver treatment for individuals with substance use disorders

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CALIFORNIA – The Mercury News [reports](#) that Proposition 36 is falling short of its promises just months after taking effect.

Proposition 36 was sold to voters as a pathway to “mass treatment” for drug addiction, allowing courts to collaborate with addiction experts to assess and refer repeat drug offenders to care. In practice, however, the measure created a new “treatment-mandated felony” without the infrastructure to support it.

Accordingly, the vast majority of individuals arrested and prosecuted pursuant to Prop 36 are simply being incarcerated instead of directed to treatment, undermining the very premise proponents relied on to sell the measure to voters.

The Mercury News found specifically that, “in the Bay Area, Proposition 36 has only succeeded in compelling a few dozen people into addiction or mental health programs.” Furthermore, data released by the California Department of Justice last month undermined another key premise; that Prop 36 was necessary to reduce property crime. That data [showed](#) California recorded the lowest levels of property crime in state history last year, prior to Proposition 36 going into effect.

“Proponents of Proposition 36 said the measure was necessary to reduce property crime and get people the help they needed. They lied. The truth is they pulled off the biggest con of California voters in recent history,” **said Tinisch Hollins, executive director of Californians for Safety and Justice, the state’s leading public safety advocacy organization.** “Proposition 36 dismantled funding for the

treatment they promised to deliver, leaving courts overwhelmed, behavioral health systems under-resourced, and vulnerable people trapped in a cycle of incarceration instead of care.”

Recent DOJ data on statewide crime statistics for 2024 showed that property and larceny theft rates fell to the lowest levels in recorded history, prior to Proposition 36 becoming law in January of 2025. Additionally, since passage of Proposition 36, some parts of California have already [reported](#) disproportionate impacts on people of color. Click [here](#) to access the DOJ’s full crime data.

To arrange an interview with Tinisch Hollins, executive director of Californians for Safety and Justice, please contact Will Matthews at (909) 261-1398 or will@safeandjust.org