



Pocomoke City Leaders, Civil Rights, and Police Groups Call on State Prosecutor to Close Case Against Kelvin Sewell

Petition, Letter Urge State Prosecutor to Focus on Serious Issues of Official Misconduct, Like Police-Involved Death of Anton Black

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POCOMOKE CITY, MD – More than 1,100 Marylanders, including many from Worcester County and Pocomoke City on the Eastern Shore, have signed [a petition](#) being sent to Maryland State Prosecutor Emmet Davitt, urging him to end the State's misguided prosecution of former Pocomoke Police Chief Kelvin Sewell. The petition drive builds on advocacy by a group of Pocomoke residents, community leaders, civil rights and police accountability advocates urging the State Prosecutor to move on to more pressing matters – like the disturbing police-involved death of Anton Black – and discontinue pursuit of Mr. Sewell.

“We are hopeful that the justice system will work in this case and the State will stop the unfair prosecution of Chief Sewell,” said Rev. Ronnie White of Citizens for a Better Pocomoke. “We’re hoping and praying that we’ll have our police chief back in Pocomoke.”

Late last year, the Maryland Court of Special Appeals overturned the wrongful 2016 conviction of Mr. Sewell – the first Black police chief in Pocomoke City whose stand against racial harassment made him the target of retaliation from local white leaders. Following that ruling, the coalition sent a letter <https://www.aclu-md.org/en/file/1923> sent to Davitt that highlights the opinion of Court of Special Appeals Judge Daniel Friedman cautioning that the evidence of wrongdoing against Sewell – related to his handling of a traffic accident where no one was hurt and the driver’s insurance paid for all damages – was so completely inadequate that the case should have been dismissed outright. Davitt acknowledged receipt of the letter in late December, but has yet to respond.

“During this month that we celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., former Chief Kelvin Sewell’s case underscores that justice continues to be elusive for African Americans in the State of Maryland,” said Carl Snowden, convenor of the Caucus of African American Leaders. “It’s our hope that the special prosecutor will drop this case.”

The letter stresses continued strong support for Chief Sewell, particularly in Pocomoke’s Black community, and voices concern for how the State Prosecutor persists in characterizing Chief Sewell’s conduct in the worst light possible. It also shares insights from residents that the continued prosecution of Sewell has been destructive to race relations in the Pocomoke community, exacerbating preexisting racial tensions, and reigniting fears of law enforcement in the Black community that Sewell had worked effectively to overcome during his time as Chief.

Additionally, the letter urges the State Prosecutor to understand that Officers of Color often are not afforded the benefit of the doubt in their decisions, and make them vulnerable to retaliation, especially when those decisions could be construed as somehow favoring other People of Color in a highly-segregated small town like Pocomoke City, where almost all the elected leaders are white. That is why the United Black Police Officers Association and the Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association – who have sued the Prince George’s Police Department (PGPD) for discrimination and retaliation against Officers of Color who speak out against discrimination and corruption in the PGPD – joined the letter to Davitt.

“I have seen how Officers of Color like Chief Sewell are often not given the same benefit of the doubt in their decisions as white officers, especially when they have spoken out against racism,” said Joe Perez, president of the Hispanic Law Enforcement Officers’ Association. “It can seem like white police leaders are just

waiting for a minority officer to misstep, ready to turn around the minute it happens and position that officer as the bad guy. That's why we are taking a stand to support Chief Sewell."

Go the ACLU of Maryland's website to read the letter to State Prosecutor Davitt:
<https://www.aclu-md.org/en/press-releases>

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