



Our Legal Fights for Improved Quality of Life

By City Attorney Mara W. Elliott

As your City Attorney, it's my job to protect San Diego and its residents.

I do that in many ways, including defending the City from frivolous lawsuits, prosecuting people who damage your quality of life, supporting survivors of domestic violence and sex trafficking, and advising City officials on how to follow the law.

This month I'd like to update you on three aspects of my work.

PROTECTING YOU FROM OPIOIDS

Addiction to opioids kills thousands of Americans and destroys countless lives every year.

This national health crisis has its roots in deception, manipulation, and greed. Opioid manufacturers used dishonest tactics to manipulate doctors into overprescribing their drugs. They got rich; America got sick.

That's why my office is suing Purdue Pharma and other manufacturers and distributors of prescription opioids who created the opioid health crisis. Our lawsuit is part of a Multi-District Litigation involving hundreds of other cities, counties, and states.

Opioids were falsely marketed to doctors as safe and non-addictive. Yet one out of five persons who are prescribed opioids for 10 days still take them one year later. Illegal labs that cook synthetic substitutes are a booming underground industry. And tens of thousands of Americans have died as a result of their addiction.

In 2017, a record 273 San Diegans died from an opioid overdose. Our first responders are overburdened with emergency calls related to opioid use and overdose – all at the taxpayers' expense.

Our lawsuit will recover those costs and compel the companies to fund drug treatment and education programs to help our addicted population and prevent it from growing.

PROTECTING OUR ECOSYSTEM

San Diego is home to a rich and diverse marine ecosystem that we all enjoy. Yellowtail tuna are one species that sustains the fragile balance of our ocean ecology, while attracting sports fishing tourists from all over the world, stimulating the local economy. These fish need our protection.

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My office prosecutes anyone who compromises our marine species by overfishing or by taking young yellowtail at their prime mating age. Recently we prosecuted a fisherman who illegally took 81 undersized yellowtail from waters off San Diego.

Returning from his excursion, the fisherman was stopped at the dock by wardens of the Department of California Fish and Wildlife, who discovered the undersized fish as he unloaded his vessel.

Last month, he pleaded guilty to 16 counts of Unlawful Possession of Fish. He was placed on probation for three years and was ordered to pay an \$8,000 fine and perform 10 days of public work service. If he violates probation, he'll serve at least 90 days in custody.

PROTECTING SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEX TRAFFICKING

My office runs the San Diego Family Justice Center, a safe place where survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking can reclaim their lives, seek justice, and begin healing.

The clients who come to the Family Justice Center need many kinds of help, including a place to stay and legal assistance.

We recently received a \$587,000 grant that will allow us to do that, and more.

Importantly, it will help provide a temporary place to stay for victims who come to the Family Justice Center to escape an abusive partner, often with their children in tow.

This is a critical need because, too often, without a safe place to spend the night, women feel they have no choice but to return to the dangerous place they fled.

The grant will also allow the Family Justice Center to expand its outreach programs to raise awareness about intimate partner violence throughout the City of San Diego including underserved populations. We look forward to continuing to serve the needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking.

These are just a few of the many issues my office is taking on to make San Diego a safer and better place for everyone, and I count you as a partner in this effort. If you'd like to learn more about our work, please visit: <https://www.sandiego.gov/cityattorney/media/releases>

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