

Report

The California State Auditor has released its report, Penalty Assessment Funds: California's Traffic Penalties and Fees Provide Inconsistent Funding for State and County Programs and Have a Significant Financial Impact on Drivers, as requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. The report can be found [HERE](http://www.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2017-126.pdf).

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System needs judges who understand bias

It is disappointing that the Judicial Council of the CABL does not recognize the significance of four experienced public defenders of color who are running to help reform the judiciary, along with the criminal justice system it presides over.

The Judicial Council of the California Association of Black Lawyers (CABL) claims the decision of four public defenders -- all of whom are people of color -- to run against incumbent judges in San Francisco "undermines judicial independence" and threatens "judicial diversity." ("Defend the independence of the judiciary," April 26). As the current president of CABL, I can assure them that our organization's founders would not only approve of the public defenders entering the judicial race, they likely vote for them if they could.

"The primary motivating factor for the organization's formation was to change the face of the judiciary in California and to influence the course of events pertinent to black people," CABL's founding members wrote more than four decades ago. In fact, among CABL's objectives was "to seek out and eradicate the roots and causes of racism" and "vigorously defend black people from those who would consciously or otherwise denied them basic human and legal rights." That sounds right in line with the goals of the public defenders.

It was 50 years ago this month when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated because he fought to change a system that openly mistreated and discriminated against blacks. In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, he stated people should be judged on the content of their character and not the color of their skin. Yet today, my black children are 10 times more likely to be convicted than whites of a crime based on the color of their skin. A recent study by the W. Haywood Burns Institute found that in San Francisco, one of the most liberal cities in the country, African-Americans are seven times more likely to be arrested and ten times more likely to be convicted of a crime than their white counterparts, even though African-Americans are 5 percent of the city's population. Over the course of one year there were 288,177 bed days as a result of jail sentences. Black adults accounted for 50 percent of these sentences every day. A second study last year by the Quattrone Center found that people of color are charged and convicted for more serious crimes than their white counterparts, even when controlling for all other factors.