



*Note: This is another post I wrote almost a year ago (typed on a laptop I can't print from), but never sent. It's old, but the gist of it is still current. I hope you'll read (and if you read, please leave a comment!).

In California, a new "tough on crime" law, Proposition 36, was just voted in by an overwhelming majority (I wrote this in December 2024). It negates much of the previous "reform" law, Proposition 47, which also passed by an overwhelming majority just a few years earlier. I realize all these numbers are meaningless to almost anyone outside this state, ~~especially~~ ^{especially} to those outside the country, so here's the story in a nutshell: Prop 47 was enacted in 2014 to reduce the penalties for relatively small thefts, under \$950, changing them from prisonable felonies to misdemeanors with more options for responses like probation, restorative justice, and efforts to understand and address the underlying causes of stealing. 2024's Prop 36 is intended to reverse much of 2014's Prop 47, following 3 years of Covid-era hyperventilation over "upticks" in large-scale retail theft, often featuring scary videos of so-called "smash and grab" robberies, where people break display cases and grab whatever they can carry (often armfuls of jewelry or expensive cosmetics), while dozens of stunned employees and shoppers watch the mayhem helplessly. Some well-publicized robberies even involved ramming cars into storefronts before cleaning them out, images that considerably ratcheted up the terror and outrage quotient. Of course, cops then took full advantage of the media's sensationalizing, frequently responding to theft calls in the most imbecilically lackadaisical way possible and falsely claiming they were hamstrung on account of (A) the long-silenced Defund Police movements that never meaningfully reduced bloated cop budgets to begin with (though the still-fully-funded pigstys never hesitated to cry poverty in a bid to load their already overflowing slop troughs even fuller with public funds); or (B) the so-called "soft on crime" or "pro-criminal" statutes like Prop 47 and similar reform bills that were passed during the 20-teens. Both deeply dishonest excuses effectively absolved the manipulative pigs' inaction in the public imagination, planting the seeds for public backlash against any laws that even moderately restrain police power to hurt people and giving cops, prosecutors, and all other public oppressors a real win-win situation.

In California specifically, however, the move to make sub-thousand-dollar thefts non-felonies

Simply cannot explain any purported "spike" in retail theft, so all the police mouthpieces are, as usual, just flat out lying through their yellow piggie teeth. Why am I so sure of this? Well, it's elementary, my dear Watson: Those shocking stories of masked robbers leaving trails of broken glass and traumatized bystanders (relatively few actual incidents, but endlessly recycled in the media) simply were not thefts of small ~~enough~~ amounts to trigger the misdemeanor threshold. I'd be surprised if even one out of twenty of those sensationalistic stories involved stolen merchandise valued below \$5,000, much less \$949 or less. Further, California's new laws in 2014 didn't legalize or remove all penalties from low-level theft — that oft-repeated lie is just the product of oversimplified authoritarian arithmetic that equates logical and level-headed approaches to "crime" with a societal endorsement of thievery.

Not that thievery, in the corporatist context, necessarily shouldn't be endorsed.

Look, the fact is, if cops could manage to extricate their fat asses from their favorite doughnut shops for more than 30-minutes a day, they could surely arrest more shoplifters, all of whom would still be handcuffed, booked, and sent through a hellish court process that imposes all manner of fines and heavily surveilled "conditional release" scenarios, as well as actual time in a cage. To be clear, this is NOT an approach I favor ~~in any way...~~ I'm just pointing out that to escape a felony record is not at all to escape the profound discomfort, disruption, and destruction of the punishment system entirely. No one is committing retail "crime" while thinking, "Hell yeah, this \$400 pair of shoes, which will probably be taken away from me, is definitely worth getting chained up and brought to jail, then burdened for the next six months to two years with endless court appearances and god-knows-what other consequences..." No, what they're really thinking, as literally all would-be "criminals" invariably think, is that they will get away with it entirely. That no one will catch them. That's the expectation of nearly every person who is about to break the law. They expect to get away with it; otherwise they wouldn't do it.

This brings us to a bigger point: The Prop 47 shift from Felony to misdemeanor charges only affected valuables totalling less than \$950, while all the thefts we see on T.V., the dramatic ones the piggies love to growl about while doing nothing to prevent them, involve MUCH more money and therefore carry much stiffer felony penalties. Yet those thefts still occur. Why? No doubt many factors are involved, but what ultimately stands out is... the robbers still believe they'll get away with it. It's as simple as that — people commit "crimes" when they expect to get away with them, and no pig-pandering legal tweaks to the punishment scheme will ever change that one fundamental, human-nature-based fact. All this ~~tough~~ "tough" new Prop 37 can promise

to accomplish is to re-~~inflation~~ gradually shrinking prison population by caging more of the poor, young, and the mentally ill who were released over the last decade. But just as fish mongers sell us our fish, fear mongers sell us fear, and we continue to buy it wholesale, no matter the actual cost in human suffering — including our own. That's all politicians and pigs have ever been: purveyors of panic. Welcome to 2025 and beyond.

Post-script: I originally wrote this in Dec. 2024. It's now ^{Jan 15,} ~~Dec.~~ 2025, and in the last week alone I saw two stories about retail theft, one of them on an organised travelling operation that took thousands of dollars in merchandise at each stop, and the other a "smash and grab" that clearly implicated all sorts of laws against property destruction, burglary, theft, and probably some sorts of endangerment statutes as well. Neither of these would be affected by Proposition 36's lowering of the felony threshold, as both were well over \$950 to begin with. These are the events that have people up in arms over "crime", and our latest performance of security theatre to address (and perpetuate) public fear can have no impact on them whatsoever. It's all fake, folks. Performative politics to manipulate you into supporting their efforts to maintain and increase their power over you. Wake up. Please.

Post-post script: Now it's September, 2025. The bigger picture is becoming clearer as Trump & Co. work to consolidate their power ahead of the 2028 elections. Crime panic could easily end up at the heart of a movement to prevent the 2028 election from happening at all, giving Donald Trump a de facto 3rd term and making any political or civil (i.e., nonviolent) resistance to the new totalitarian regime utterly impotent. "Crime", despite remaining at near-historic lows in nearly all places and all categories, will be these goons' "Trump card", and if we let them play it, we will lose this game, the wager on which is our very freedom and dignity. Don't misunderstand me, the threat could've and can and I'm sure will come from the left as well as the right, it's a threat by politics as a whole, but this is where we are right now. Again... please wake up. See what's in front of our noses. Please.