

Letter: Commonwealth's Attorney contender has right skills for job

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Editor: I'm writing in response to your recent editorial on Parisa Tafti's primary challenge to Commonwealth's Attorney Theo Stamos.

As a 54-year Arlington resident and as someone who cut his political teeth in the Fahey-Feeley contest that was referenced in the editorial, I disagree with your assessment that the commonwealth's attorney's race of 1986 when Helen Fahey defeated Brendan Feeley has parallels to the 2019 contest.

Ms. Fahey who was an experienced prosecutor was opposed by Mr. Feeley, who had little experience in, or knowledge of, the criminal-justice system. His main recommendation to many Democrats was that he had run against Henry Hudson in the previous general election. There was little to indicate that Mr. Feeley had the knowledge or capability or interest to change the system as does Ms. Tafti.

Today we have a challenger who has 20 years in criminal justice and who understands the urgent need for reform; a position held across a broad political spectrum – not only liberals, but conservative libertarians at the Cato Institute and conservative Republicans like Ken Cuccinelli.

Ms. Tafti favors ending cash bail; establishing diversion rather than incarceration for youth and people with disabilities, mental illness and addiction; decriminalizing marijuana; stopping civil-asset forfeiture without conviction; restoring voting rights for returning citizens; collecting and sharing data on charging, prosecution and sentencing decisions; fighting against racial disparities; not seeking the death penalty; and supporting the criminal-justice-reform agenda of the Democratic caucus in Richmond. On every one of these issues, Ms. Stamos holds a contrary view.