

YOUR OPINIONS

DA should aspire to justice, not just convictions

Re: "Pledge to release detainees unmet," Page 1, Aug. 31.

Last week, New Orleans District Attorney Eddie Jordan said he cares more about convictions than the constitutional rights of Louisiana residents. This violates his professional and ethical oath of office — to seek justice, not convictions.

The Orleans district attorney ought to be concerned about the public defender crisis. Judge Arthur Hunter has made a public commitment to stop violating the rights of people who have been "doing Katrina time" for over a year without any legal counsel.

Since long before Katrina and Rita, the state has been failing residents when it comes to providing a functioning justice system. The wrath of the storm left an already broken system completely shattered, and the state has barely begun to pick up the pieces. When any portion of the justice system — courts, prosecutors, police or defense — fails to operate effectively, everyone is at risk. Crimes go unpunished, mistakes on guilt or innocence are made and public safety is threatened.

In 1985, I was wrongfully con-

victed by the Orleans district attorney's office and sentenced to death row at Angola for a crime that I did not commit. I was acquitted in 2003.

In my case, the DA got his conviction, but he got it wrong. I paid for that decision with 18 years of my life. To this day, no person has been brought to justice for those crimes.

We need a statewide justice system that works. Every Louisiana resident deserves that much.

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