

As President of Baltimore City FOP Lodge #3, I would like to respond to one of the reforms proposed, yesterday, by State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby concerning the elimination of bench trials in the State of Maryland. Mrs. Mosby takes the position that a criminal defendant, police or citizen, should not have the right to request a bench trial to determine their guilt or innocence, when criminal charges are placed against them. Mrs. Mosby points to the inability to convict any officers charged in the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody. Every Judge in the State of Maryland, and particularly those Judges assigned to the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, should be offended at this position because what Mrs. Mosby is saying is that she does not believe that Judges who hear cases, non-jury, would do so in a fair and impartial manner nor can they render a verdict solely based on the evidence presented. What Mrs. Mosby is doing is questioning the integrity of every Judge in the State of Maryland particularly those Judges in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. It should be noted that before anyone can become a Judge in the State of Maryland, they must be recommended for the position by a judicial nominating commission comprised of attorneys and citizens which determine their qualifications to sit on the bench. The Governor in the State of Maryland appoints all Judges and every Circuit Judge must be confirmed by the voters of the jurisdiction in which they preside. Mrs. Mosby's position makes a mockery of the judicial selection process. In the view of the Fraternal Order of Police, Judge Barry Williams rendered a verdict of not guilty in the cases he adjudicated concerning the death of Freddie Gray consistent with the law and in accordance with his oath of office requiring that his decision be fair and impartial based solely on the evidence. I would like to extend my thanks to Senator James Brochin of Baltimore County for his immediate public statement and for expressing his opposition to any attempt to legislate the right of any criminal defendant who elects to be tried by a Judge within the State of Maryland. It is our hope and expectation that the General Assembly will see it the same way.