



70 Million S2 E10 Transcript: Two Rural Counties Take Diverting Paths to Jail Reform

Drug felony charges have more than doubled in Colorado as the state faces an opioid crisis. Jail admissions are on the rise in some counties while diversion efforts are proving effective in others. And some jails have also become a "dumping ground" for people with mental illness who are arrested. We go to Southern Colorado to meet two sheriffs battling the same issue—jail overcrowding—with differing results.

Dive deeper into reform efforts in Colorado and beyond in our [episode toolkit](#).

Mitzi Miller:

70 million adults in the United States have a criminal record.

This is Season Two of [70 Million](#), an open source podcast about how people, neighborhoods, counties, and cities are breaking cycles of incarceration—starting with the local jail.

I'm your host, Mitzi Miller.

Clips:

"So I got to experience the uncomfortability of just being stuffed in a cage and all that. It was real scary."

"They're keeping people down there with rats, roaches, they got black mold, and we spend \$16 million on it every year."

"We eliminated cash bail bonds in the city of Atlanta."

"There's no one who's been incarcerated, including myself, who has been helped by incarceration."

Miller:

Southern Colorado is known for its natural beauty: snow capped mountains, red sandstone, and wide open spaces. Small towns pop up between long stretches of two-lane roads. But this sprawling landscape has a hidden overcrowding problem in its jails.

Colorado's not alone in this: nationwide, [rural jail populations are growing at a faster rate than those in urban areas](#). County sheriffs across the country have been grappling with this crisis for years—trying to figure out why their jails are over capacity. And what to do about it.

Reporter Laine Kaplan-Levenson brings us a tale of two Colorado sheriffs meeting this rural jail crisis head-on.

Laine Kaplan-Levenson: [Alamosa](#) is a small town. Everywhere you look, you're surrounded by snow-capped mountains, the bases of which are blanketed with massive sand dunes. If you're new to the place, you feel the altitude. A few bars and restaurants, a coffee shop, and a bookstore dot Main Street. And down the road there's a fair share of fast food joints, department stores, and motels. It's the commercial hub of the rural, and at times remote [San Luis Valley](#).

I don't waste any time once I get to town. I head straight to the sheriff.

Robert Jackson: My name is Robert Jackson. I'm the [Alamosa County Colorado Sheriff](#) and we're here in Alamosa, Colorado. The land of cool sunshine.

Kaplan-Levenson: It's not a typical place, and ...

Jackson: I don't think I'm your typical sheriff.

Kaplan-Levenson: One of the first things I learn in Sheriff Bob Jackson's office is that his nickname is Pineapple.

Jackson: They were saying yeah, "pineapple, pineapple, pineapple" on the radio. So that was my code. My secret code name was pineapple.

Kaplan-Levenson: He didn't get it at first, but then realized, his deputies were making a pot reference. And Jackson, one of the only democratic sheriffs in the state, is pretty lax about marijuana.

Jackson: I really don't care if one of my guys smokes a doobie on Friday night and comes to work Monday and he's sober. I don't really care, that's not my business, and it's not against the law.

Kaplan-Levenson: Jackson is small in stature but in great shape for someone who just celebrated his 70th birthday. He's got a goofy grin that often comes with a chuckle. Like when he talks about how many New Yorkers his officers

have to go rescue after they ignorantly try to climb one of the county's many 14,000 ft mountains.

Jackson: We go get them. [Laughs] Brutal.

Kaplan-Levenson: The guy's kind of an open book. Being in his office is like jumping inside a life-size diorama of his high school diary: school degrees, movie posters, photographs line the walls. On a big conference table sits a blueprint of the county jail, which is right on the other side of his office. He's also an open book when it comes to that, his jail.

Jackson: So when we first walk in, and we're going to walk into the part that's still under construction...

Kaplan-Levenson: Jackson leads me through a heavy door into the Alamosa County jail, a ranch style building that spreads out wide instead of tall. Inmates sit in cells, and common rooms. A tinted glass wall separates us, as I peer from the hallway into their space. We can see them, but they can barely see us. This is a brand new wing of the jail, very clean and bright. The original building is about to complete a major renovation, including [expanding it to roughly three times the size](#). Being in a small town, the jail was small to begin with.

Jackson: It was originally designed and built for 48, and we put triple bunks in here. We were stacking them in here.

Kaplan-Levenson: Sheriff Jackson walks me into a tight space with bunk beds on each side, a tightrope of a walkway in between. When the jail was over capacity, inmates were sleeping three to a bunk, putting a third person on the very top, just inches from the ceiling.

Jackson: A lot of times they went, "Oh no, I'm not sleeping up there." And we find them underneath the bed.

Kaplan-Levenson: Jackson was [elected sheriff in 2014](#), after 31 years in law enforcement. At that time, Alamosa's jail population was hovering between 70 to 80 people, just under capacity. But when his term started in 2015,

Jackson: I mean I walked in here going, holy crap.

Kaplan-Levenson: In almost the blink of an eye, the jail population went through the roof.

Jackson: We went from 75, 80 probably to 170 inmates. Like really quick. No place

to put them.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: [Roughly 30% percent of people](#) in Alamosa live below the poverty line. For comparison, that's [twice the rate](#) of Denver County. Folks here work jobs either in the potato and mushroom fields, or the local stores. Many, if not most, are either working paycheck to paycheck, or in and out of having a job at all.

What are the reasons that people are getting arrested here?

Jamie Keairns: It's all over the map. I mean, drugs. Drugs are huge here.

Kaplan-Levenson: This is Jamie Keairns, the head of the [Alamosa Public Defender's office](#).

Keairns: There's certainly an opioid crisis in the valley. I think there is everywhere in the country it seems. But it's, it's really pronounced here.

Kaplan-Levenson: The San Luis Valley has the highest rates of drug overdose deaths in the state. And those numbers [have increased significantly](#) in the past decade. Which corresponds to a spike in drug charges. Since 2012, drug felony charges have [more than doubled](#) in Colorado. In Alamosa, they [more than tripled](#). And when Sheriff Bob Jackson's jail population spiked in 2014,

Jackson: My people tell me [92% of that intake was heroin addicts](#).

Kaplan-Levenson: To make matters worse, there's no public rehab center. So where do people end up? The jail. Jamie Keairns says it's the same story with mental health.

Keairns: We don't have places where you can take mentally ill folks and get them treatment and get them help, you know, paid for by the state. So we've replaced that with jail.

Kaplan-Levenson: According to a [2019 report](#) from advocacy group [Mental Health America](#), about 20 percent of the state's adult population—over 800,000 people—is living with some kind of mental health condition. [Over half](#) aren't being treated for that illness. And with the lack of treatment centers, they end up in hospital emergency rooms, or, as Sheriff Jackson knows, jails.

Jackson: You know we're kind of the dumping ground for people. Nobody knows what to do with them. Put them in the jail, let us deal with them. Not ok.

Kaplan-Levenson: Jackson says that's a huge part of why so many of his beds are full. And that oftentimes, drug addiction and mental health issues are intertwined.

Jackson: People are suicidal as hell when they're detoxing. Scary. We got a guy that was eating toothbrushes, pencils. Do you want to record this? He ate a spoon, pooped it out, ate it again, right on camera in front of our guys. And mental health said he wasn't a danger to himself or others.

Kaplan-Levenson: Because they don't want to take them in.

Jackson: Where are they gonna put them? They're full. They're full.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: After the facility tour, I was back in Sheriff Jackson's office looking at younger versions of him up on his wall.

Jackson: That must have been about '85 or '86, we didn't even wear bulletproof vests then.

Kaplan-Levenson: It's fun to pick him out in all these photos. But the more I looked, the more I started recognizing someone else.

Jackson: Have you interviewed Kirk Taylor yet? There he is right there. This is taken in 1992. So he's a city cop. And standing right next to him is me.

Kaplan-Levenson: Kirk Taylor. Jackson's old patrol partner. There's pictures of them posing in front of their patrol car.

Jackson: This one looks like *Risky Business*. Remember that movie?

Kaplan-Levenson: Pictures of them dressed up at weddings, dressed down on vacation.

Jackson: He and I go to the mountains every summer on horseback. And every year he says, just me and you this year, we're not taking anybody. He always brings somebody and they're always a pain in the ass, you know.

Music break.

Kirk Taylor: *He's kinda creepy, I'm afraid to get up in the mountains alone with him.*

Kaplan-Levenson: This, is Kirk Taylor.

Taylor: He might eat me or something. [Laughs].

Kaplan-Levenson: Kirk Taylor is sheriff of [Pueblo, Colorado](#). Or as he calls it,

Taylor: Pueblo, America.

Kaplan-Levenson: Sheriff Taylor is not just an old patrol partner, he's Sheriff Jackson's best friend.

Taylor: We kind of have a bromance going on. I gotta be honest with you.

Kaplan-Levenson: Two besties, who have their differences.

Jackson: Usually I take his advice and do the opposite, and turn out fine.

Kaplan-Levenson: Take pot. Sheriff Jackson is all for legalization, but Sheriff Taylor?

Jackson: He is anti-marijuana. He calls it the devil's lettuce.

Kaplan-Levenson: But there's one major thing they have in common: Crowded jails. Here's Pueblo Sheriff Kirk Taylor:

Taylor: We are the most overcrowded in the state. So you never want to be first, but we're number one.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: Pueblo's a mid-sized city, and a lot larger than Alamosa. Another difference

between the two places is their recent political diversion. In 2012, both conservative democratic counties [voted for Obama](#). In 2016, Alamosa [voted for Hilary Clinton](#), and Pueblo [voted for Donald Trump](#).

But these places have plenty in common, too. Pueblo also has a [huge opioid problem](#). And a lot of people here are poor. And unemployed. It's an old steel town, and most people used to work at the big mill.

Now, it's the [Evrz North America](#) steel mill. But over the past decade, the mill [started slashing jobs](#). Which helps to explain why Pueblo's unemployment rate is [nearly 50% higher](#) than the state's as a whole.

And so, just like in Alamosa, this combination of poverty and drugs has resulted in more people finding themselves behind bars. The Friday I visited the jail,

Taylor: It looks like it's about a 653. We'll break 700 by this weekend.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: The Pueblo county jail is a five story tower with [509 beds](#). It's hot and stuffy. It doesn't smell good. Like old food and filthy clothes. The fluorescent lighting makes it too bright, unless the bulbs are out, in which case it's too dark.

I walk through the halls, and look through a glass window into a pod. Each pod has a main common space, with rooms lining the perimeter. Those rooms are meant for one person, but have three people crammed in there. And out in the common area, there are a whole bunch of what they call "boats."

Jeffrey Seis: A boat is pretty much a cot. A cot that lifts you lift you off the ground and you stay off the ground and just put a, put your mattress on top of it.

Kaplan-Levenson: Jeffrey Seis has been living out of one of these boats for two weeks. It's a bed, literally in the common space, just a few inches off the floor. His towel, and toiletries, photographs, and other personal belongings are lined up on the floor next to the plastic bed frame. When I meet him, he's sitting in his boat cross-legged, writing a letter to his girlfriend.

Seis: And uh, it's just for being overcrowded. There ain't no room, just had the space for the rest of us out here. You can see there's probably like eight of us out here on boats. So it's, it's not good. You know what I'm saying? It's not good because it's cold out here, it's loud, you're in the middle of the action all the time.

Kaplan-Levenson: I see a lot in the Pueblo jail in a short amount of time. Right before I get there, two rival gangs get into a big confrontation. Then, within the first ten minutes of walking through one of the women's dorms, I see a woman spasm onto the floor, as guards rush towards her. Captain Shelly Bryant, who's showing me around, tells me the woman is having a seizure.

Shelly Bryant: This is what happens a lot of times when inmates are having really bad

withdrawals. They have seizures, whether it's alcohol, drugs, this is pretty common place, uh, for males and females in the building to be honest with you.

Kaplan-Levenson: And then, I hear about the flooding.

Bryant: 5416, 417 override!

Kaplan-Levenson: The jail's not just overcrowded. It's old, and after decades of neglect, it's literally falling apart.

Nathan Hawkins: It was like a lake. I mean there was so much water in there. I mean it was just flooded.

Kaplan-Levenson: Nathan Hawkins was assigned to a cell on the top floor of the jail. There were bad rains the week before I visited, and his pod flooded badly.

Hawkins: We're at risk, if this collapses were, we're pretty much dead. Each one of these beams weighs at least 28, 20 tons.

Kaplan-Levenson: Do you worry about that?

Hawkins: I do worry about, as a matter of fact, I'm worried about all this part of the wing collapsing.

Kaplan-Levenson: [There's too much water when it floods, but at the same time, Nathan can hardly get any out of his sink](#). I look over and see water dribbling out of the faucet. He tells me that's the most pressure he can get.

Hawkins: Our jail is not in livable condition. We're not animals where it's, we're humans. We're humans, you know.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: Pueblo Sheriff Kirk Taylor thinks he knows the main reason he's got 200 more people than beds in his jail.

Kirk Taylor: I think the legislature has a lot of responsibility on what's happening now.

Kaplan-Levenson: Taylor says that statewide efforts to decarcerate prisons are having a negative impact on local jails. For instance, a [recent piece of state legislation](#) that downgrades numerous drug felonies to misdemeanors.

Taylor: Well in theory that sounds great, right? But what that means is once they dropped them to misdemeanors, you can't go to D.O.C. for a misdemeanor.

Kaplan-Levenson: D.O.C. is state prison.

Taylor: So where's the only place you can be incarcerated should they convict you of that misdemeanor that was just downgraded? County jails.

Because I hear it from the state all the time. They're like, oh yeah, we're dropping our numbers in the prisons. Well, yeah, well guess what? They're coming to the local jails.

Kaplan-Levenson: People that don't agree with everything Sheriff Taylor says, do agree with this give and take. Like the Pueblo Public Defender, Alby Singleton.

Alby Singleton: There has been reform, but there's still more people, you know, just as many if not more people in jail.

Kaplan-Levenson: I meet Singleton at the Pueblo Public Defender's office, located in the historic red brick Union Depot building, what used to be a railroad station. He gets going before we're fully seated at the table.

Singleton: There's so many behaviors that are criminalized. There's so many things that are crimes. Uh, we have so many laws that criminalize kind of trivial behavior. There's so many dumb cases that are filed.

Kaplan-Levenson: "Like what?" I ask.

Singleton: Uh, okay. You're asked by a police officer what your name is, and you say two words that aren't the truth. You're charged with a Class Six felony. We have clients that are sitting in jail for that. You go in to pawn something and you do not put the accurate amount of time that you have owned an item that you have pawned. That's a felony.

Kaplan-Levenson: Singleton prefers to make the overcrowding issue as simple as possible. He says more and more people are cooped up in jail because the system is designed to put them there.

Singleton: There's a, on both sides of the aisle and America, a very healthy appetite for one thing. And that's punishment. Doesn't matter whether you're wearing a red tie or blue tie. There are people on both ends of that

spectrum that love that. And that's something that definitely impacts everybody that's charged with a crime.

Kaplan-Levenson: As we're talking, I look over at a large framed photo on the wall, and see a familiar face.

Singleton: You see Jamie in there? She used to work here.

Kaplan-Levenson: Jamie Keairns, head of the Alamosa Public Defender's office. She used to work with Alby Singleton in Pueblo. Small world, man.

Music break.

Back in Alamosa, Public Defender Jamie Keairns says the overcrowding can also be traced to another part of the system.

Keairns: The cash bond system in general. I really hope that in 50 years we're looking back on this and thinking, what on earth were we doing?

Kaplan-Levenson: The cash bond system.¹ A.k.a. bail. She says cash bond as a way to get out of jail, doesn't work in a place where people don't have cash.

Keairns: I think it's hard for a lot of folks who don't live in poverty to understand that level of poverty. Like, there's no one in your life that you could ask for \$250? Where you know folks that don't live in poverty have probably a hundred people they might be able to ask who would come up for \$250 for them.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: But if you can't pay bail, you sit in jail. And you could be there for a while. In rural places like Alamosa, judges work part time. If someone gets arrested on a Tuesday. Let's say they were driving without a license. That's a big one in Alamosa. They might not see the judge until the following Tuesday. So they wait, behind bars, unable to work or take care of family. And Jamie says this can send someone's life into a downward spiral, real quick.

Keairns: It just completely destabilizes people that are already struggling to make ends meet for no purpose.

¹ For more on the impact of cash bail and efforts to reform it, see [Episode 3 of Season 2 of 70 Million](#).

Kaplan-Levenson: 80% of the people in Alamosa County Jail are pre-trial. Meaning they haven't been found guilty of anything.

Keairns: I mean that number should just make people want to tear their hair out.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: In Alamosa in 2017. Sheriff Jackson was "tearing his hair out". The jail was [140% over capacity](#), and things were getting out of control. That year, a [woman gave birth alone in a cell, without any medical assistance](#).² There was a scabies outbreak. And people were literally sleeping on top of one another.

Jackson decided the solution was to build a bigger jail. And to do that, he needed a campaign.

Jackson: We did 25 community meetings. We talked about our overpopulation. We've talked about the safety of them, the citizens you know, sooner or later people are going to start escaping. And we had like three escapes, you know, in three years, you know. And it was all based on over population and you know, deputies stretched too thin.

So I told them it's about their safety, I told him it was about the safety of the people that work in here, and it's not really okay to have people incarcerated and living in these conditions.

Kaplan-Levenson: The ask was a 1 cent sales tax referendum that would pay for a new courthouse and a new jail that housed an additional 64 beds. And it worked. [Alamosa went for it.](#)

Jackson: They believed me. They believed me that this was inhumane. We need to fix this. We need to make it safer. We don't mind paying a penny more sales tax to do that.

Kaplan-Levenson: The new jail is safer now.

Jackson: We didn't even have sprinklers in our old system. If we were to have a fire in there when we first took over, we would have lost half of our inmates.

Kaplan-Levenson: Along with a sprinkler system, there's now a state of the art kitchen,

² For more on the challenges of pregnant women in jail, see [Episode 8 of Season 2 of 70 Million](#).

padded holding cells, a staff nurse, for the first time. And when the expansion project is complete, there'll be 160 beds.

The thing is, when I visited, there were only 74 people in the jail.

Jackson: Our numbers are down. Thank goodness our numbers, we don't know why. Less people are being arrested and we don't know why.

Kaplan-Levenson: Well, he has some idea.

Jackson24: Mainly it's the LEAD program.

Kaplan-Levenson: [LEAD](#). Law enforcement Assisted Diversion is a program that works if and only if people do things they don't usually do, and collaborate with people they don't usually collaborate with. It focuses on drug offenders. Instead of arresting them, police officers are supposed to call LEAD, who come to the scene and take over.³

Jackson: You know, when I was a new cop and we caught somebody with heroin,
oh
my God, you're going to prison. But nowadays we are training them to be a little bit more understanding, a little bit warmer and fuzzier. And that's hard for cops. You've been around cops and you know, most of them kind of old school, you know, hard core. So we're training them to be aware of this stuff and have more options. You don't absolutely have to arrest a guy with heroin and put him in jail.

Kaplan-Levenson: So LEAD has diverted people from the jail, and brought its population down. And, there's something else Alamosa has going for them. The [Center for Restorative Programs](#), or CRP.

It's a nonprofit that runs restorative justice programs like community mediation and victim-offender reconciliation. Historically, CRP only worked with youth, but in the past few years it started doing restorative justice circles and other jail diversion programs with adults, too.

Really simple initiatives that CRP has advocated for have also been really effective. Like the new automated calls that alert clients to their upcoming court dates.

Music break.

³ For more on how LEAD works, see the [LEAD National Support Bureau](#).

So yeah, the jail expansion passed. But that's not what's fixed the overcrowding problem. Fewer arrests means fewer people in jail. Public Defender Jamie Keairns says she's not against improving jail conditions.

Keairns: I don't think there's anything wrong with jails being very nice facilities. I mean, I think they should be because we're choosing to lock up our fellow citizens and our fellow human beings in cages.

Kaplan-Levenson: But she says it's really the collaboration between the judges, the DA, the Public Defender, law enforcement, and non-governmental agencies like CRP that's driving a deeper change.

Keairns: I'm sorry that we built this nice new facility when maybe we're on a trajectory to start changing that. It can just be a relic that people look at one day and say, what were we thinking? What were we doing? [Laughs].

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: Back in Pueblo, Sheriff Taylor is trying to build exactly what Jamie Kearns is sorry Alamosa now has: a nice new jail.

In 2015, the sheriff asked the people of Pueblo to pass a sales tax to fund a bigger jail. [57% percent of Pueblo voters](#) said no. So in 2017, in even deeper dire straits, [Taylor went back to the voters again](#).

Taylor: Yeah, and they rejected both.

Street sounds.

Kaplan-Levenson: To get a sense of why, I went down to the Pueblo courthouse, a brand spanking new building that really sticks out in town. Most of Pueblo looks like the old gritty rundown steel mill. But the new courthouse would fit in in midtown Manhattan, with a facade made of sleek metal panels and tall glass windows that wrap around its five stories.

I met Jennifer in the parking lot as she was walking back to her car after a court hearing. She didn't want to share her last name, but she was happy to tell me why she voted against the new jail.

Jennifer: Why? Because I think that money would be better served to go for like

rehabilitation or better programs to keep these people out of jail instead of expanding it and you know, housing more people in jail. Cause that's not a solution. That's just, you know, it's not helping anybody. That's the problem.

Kaplan-Levenson: Have you ever had to spend time in the county jail?

George: 21 days? Yeah. I hated it.

Kaplan-Levenson: That's George, who was picking his wife, Cindy, up from the courthouse. She was just walking out when he and I started talking. They also didn't want to share their last names.

Cindy: I don't like the Pueblo jail. If you go to any other jail, I think it's cool, but not that one. Yeah, I'd rather be in prison than that ugly county.

George: That's why I don't understand these people that vote. Why they don't vote for a bigger jail. I don't understand that.

Kaplan-Levenson: George and Cindy would have voted to expand the jail, for the sake of the people that are cooped up in there. But, they didn't vote.

Talking.

Kaplan-Levenson: There was one more place I figured I should go to get people's unfiltered opinions.

Vic Plutt: How did you find Eiler's? No, you need to put this on tape. How the hell did you find Eiler's bar?

Kaplan-Levenson: I meet Vic Plutt at his neighborhood bar, Eiler's Place. He's drinking a beer with a lime and an olive in it. He tells me it's a Slovenian thing.

Anyway, I ask him how he voted on Sheriff Taylor's proposal to fund the jail expansion.

Plutt: No, never vote for tax increase, I don't care what it is for. They wasted enough of our money.

Kaplan-Levenson: I heard that a lot. People didn't want to pay for the jail, not necessarily because they're against jail expansion. They're just straight up against taxes.

Plutt: I vote no on any tax increase. [I was the county assessor](#). You never vote for a tax increase. They put it on, but they never take it off.

Kaplan-Levenson: I had no idea I was talking to a retired city employee. But it was people like Vic, and Jennifer, two people voting against the sales tax for two totally different reasons, that left Sheriff Taylor empty handed when he tried in 2015, and again in 2017. Now, he's planning his third ask. And his new funding plan? A tax on pot. Or, as he puts it, the devil's lettuce.

So your new jail's gonna come from the devil's lettuce?

Taylor: There you go. There you go.

Kaplan-Levenson: Measure 1B would increase the retail sales tax of marijuana by 2.5%, and reduce the excise tax by 2 percent. But even that, can't fund the new jail on its own.

Taylor is also proposing [Measure 1A](#), a slightly less than half-cent sales and use tax that would raise enough money over 30 years to pay for a new jail. The sheriff's hoping these two measures will allow him to build a jail almost twice the current size: [950 beds](#).

Do you think people are going to go for it this time?

Taylor: I do. I'm cautiously optimistic that once we roll out this formula that we're going to present to them that they're going to be, I think they're going to be okay with it.

Kaplan-Levenson: He says it's not a want, it's a need.

Taylor: I have high-risk inmates in a dormitory setting. Unheard of. It's a perfect storm. So just with that, your incidents increase. Your inmate on inmate assaults, your inmate on officer assaults, all these things, uh, damage to the facility increases, all these things increased. So not only am I overcrowded by a ton, my physical plant is not conducive to hold what I am now holding.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: In the past few years, there have been [lawsuits](#) filed against jail officials for alleged [medical neglect](#) and [assault](#) of inmates. One law firm wrote that ["conditions at the Pueblo jail are deplorable."](#)

Sheriff Taylor himself has said in the past that a large lawsuit is pretty much unavoidable if things don't change.

And he says he hears critics who say building a new jail isn't solving the right problem.

Taylor: I mean this is the system that we have. And uh, well you know, I'm sorry we have to have jails, but we do.

Kaplan-Levenson: He says he's just trying to do his job.

Taylor: Look, it's not my jail, they say sorry sheriff you didn't get your jail. It's not my jail. It's our, it's our jail. It's a community jail. Right?

And so our only job is to hold the community accountable to a set of rules that have been designated by our representatives. And, uh, the criminal justice system needs to work.

Well the foundational piece of a criminal justice system is a jail. That's what our whole system is based upon. Now, if they want to change the whole system, change the whole system, I'll learn it and I'll run for sheriff. Right? But currently, I mean, that's our system of government. And so I'm doing my job. So, I don't know. I don't have all the answers.

Music break.

Kaplan-Levenson: He'll have one answer, come November, when the proposition to fund a new jail comes up for a vote once again.

Music break.

Miller: Laine Kaplan-Levenson is a radio producer based in Washington, DC.

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