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**From:** Cato Institute [events@cato.org]  
**Sent:** 7/6/2018 1:08:25 PM  
**To:** Beck, Nancy [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=168ecb5184ac44de95a913297f353745-Beck, Nancy]  
**Subject:** Plea Bargaining: Good Policy or Good Riddance? | Policy Forum | July 19, 2018

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The Cato Institute invites you to a Policy Forum on Thursday, July 19, 2018

# Plea Bargaining: Good Policy or Good Riddance?

featuring

**Hon. Joseph R. Goodwin**, U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of West Virginia

**Scott H. Greenfield**, Attorney and Counselor at Law, New York City

**Prof. Suja Thomas**, Peer and Sarah Pedersen Professor of Law, Illinois College of Law

moderated by

**Clark Neily**, Vice President for Criminal Justice, Cato Institute

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Today, more than 95 percent of criminal convictions in the United States are obtained through plea bargains. As the Supreme Court observed in 2012, “criminal justice today is for the most part a system of pleas, not a system of trials.” Compared with jury trials, plea bargains are efficient and inexpensive, and they free up resources that might otherwise be devoted to securing convictions in cases where the defendant’s guilt is not seriously in doubt.

But plea bargaining has a dark side as well. Given the imbalance of resources between prosecutors and most defendants, together with the array of tools that prosecutors can bring to bear in any given case, such as mandatory minimum sentences, charge-stacking, and witness inducements, it is fair to ask how many guilty pleas are truly voluntary. A growing body of evidence suggests that false confessions may not be nearly as rare as we would hope, and indeed the specter of coercion

## EVENT INFORMATION

**Date:** July 19, 2018

**Time:** 12:00PM - 1:30PM  
(Luncheon to follow)

**Cost:** Free of charge

**Location:** Cato Institute  
1000 Massachusetts Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20001 ([map](#))

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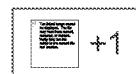
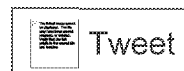
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casts a shadow over the entire plea-bargaining process.

Finally, there is the question of citizen participation in the criminal justice system, which Judge Joseph Goodwin of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia cited repeatedly in a trio of decisions, culminating in the announcement that he will no longer accept plea agreements except when there are truly extenuating, case-specific circumstances. Our panelists will discuss the pros and cons of that policy and consider what the effect might be on America's criminal justice system—and the fate of individual defendants—if other judges began adopting it as well.

*Twitter to get future event updates, live streams, and videos from the Cato Institute.*



## **Additional Events:**

### *To Err Is Human*

July 12, 2018 • Washington, DC

### **Solomon's Decree: Conflicts in Adoption and Child Placement Policy**

July 19, 2018 • Washington, DC

### **Cato University: College of History and Philosophy**

August 2-4, 2018 • San Diego, CA

### **17th Annual Constitution Day**

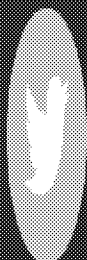
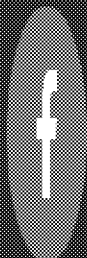
September 17, 2018 • Washington, DC

### **Cato University: College of Economics**

October 25-27, 2018 • Boston, MA

[More events]

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