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Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein Named Finalist in National Ideas Challenge

Work on diversion program is recognized as one of most innovative/impactful state or local policy proposals to empower disadvantaged populations

Washington, DC—The NewDEAL announced today that Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein’s efforts to reform the city’s criminal justice system have made him a finalist in the 2019 New Ideas Challenge —a competition among rising and innovative state and local policymakers to propose the most effective solutions on an array of issues. Policy experts vote for the proposals that best improve Americans’ economic well-being and overall quality of life, and that make government work more effectively to meet communities’ needs. A full list of finalists is below.

Of fifty proposals evaluated by an esteemed and diverse panel of judges (see list below), City Attorney Klein’s [Helping Understand Barriers \(HUB\) Prosecutor Diversion Program](#) is a finalist in the Empowering Disadvantaged Communities category, which includes ideas to ensure people facing systemic obstacles have a fair shot to contribute and thrive. His program identifies the root causes of petty theft offenses and then connects those accused to relevant community services. This upfront investment allows Klein to address an individual’s holistic needs with the goal of preventing future crime.

“In a world being rapidly transformed by the forces of globalization and technological innovation, and where Americans have lost faith in national government to solve pressing issues, the New Ideas Challenge shows how a group of innovative state and local officials are rising to the challenge of breaking down barriers and creating opportunity for their constituents,” said NewDEAL CEO Debbie Cox Bultan. **“Attorney Klein and his fellow finalists have made proposals that, together, set an important governing agenda for the country to follow and for making the economy and government work better for the American people.”**

The Challenge was open to the 166 members of the NewDEAL (Developing Exceptional American Leaders), an organization that supports state and local pro-growth progressive elected officials through the exchange of ideas and engagement with other top public, private, and non-profit sector officials. U.S. Senator Mark Warner (VA) and former Delaware Governor Jack Markell serve as Honorary Co-Chairs of the group.

The five winners of the New Ideas Challenge will be announced on Thursday November 21, 2019 at the ninth annual NewDEAL Leaders Conference in Washington.

In its fourth edition, this year's competition takes place in the context of a presidential campaign that gives Americans a unique opportunity to debate the direction of the country, the society we want to build for present and future generations, and the policies required to achieve our goals. NewDEALers are at the forefront of efforts to make good on the promise of states and cities as laboratories of democracy. The Ideas Challenge recognizes that these leaders, who represent diverse communities from urban centers to rural towns and in red, blue, and purple districts, have powerful messages, experiences, and proposals that must be heard.

“I am thrilled to be named a finalist and to be included in this group of talented leaders across the country,” said City Attorney Klein. “There are so many big challenges facing communities across America, and it’s important that we share creative and common-sense solutions that are working in our cities. We are very proud of this program, which seeks to reduce recidivism in our overcrowded jails, give folks the chance for economic opportunity, and ultimately increase public safety in our community.

Winners for this year's Ideas Challenge were selected in the following categories:

- **Adapting to the future of work** with ideas for ensuring everyone, including traditionally underserved populations, has opportunities to access good jobs and for supporting an entrepreneurial ecosystem, while also addressing the health care, housing, and other safety net elements necessary for security and stability;
- **Expanding access to education**, with opportunities at every level – from early childhood to post-secondary – to prepare students to make the most of their abilities;
- **Securing our communities and our planet**, with ideas for states, cities, and regions to address climate change;
- **Empowering disadvantaged populations** with policies that ensure people facing systemic obstacles have a fair shot to contribute and thrive;
- **Rebuilding community** by effectively and efficiently solving problems, and engaging people in civic society.

Submissions to the New Ideas Challenge [were evaluated by eight judges:](#)

Andrei Cherny, CEO, Aspiration

Micaela Fernandez Allen, Director of Global Public Policy, Walmart

Alastair Fitzpayne, Executive Director, Aspen Future of Work Initiative

Christy Goldfuss, Senior Vice President for Energy and Environment Policy, Center for American Progress

Dan'l Lewin, President & CEO, Computer History Museum
Amy Liu, Vice President and Director, Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings
Steven Olikara, Founder & President, Millennial Action Project

2019 New Ideas Challenge Finalists:

Adapting to the Future of Work

[PTSD Coverage for First Responders](#) – Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, Norwalk, CT

[Creating Portable Benefits](#) – Senator Eric Lesser, Longmeadow, MA

[Accelerated Career Certification for the Unemployed/Underemployed](#) – Senator Troy Singleton, Moorestown, NJ

Expanding Access to Education

[City of Columbus ACCESS](#) – Councilmember Elizabeth Brown, Columbus, OH

[Library in Every School Plan](#) – House Democratic Whip Darrin Camilleri, Brownstown, MI

[Alabama School of Cyber Technology & Engineering](#) – House Minority Leader Anthony Daniels, Huntsville, AL

Securing our Communities and our Planet

[Schools as a Center of Sustainability](#) – School Board Member Laura Capps, Santa Barbara, CA

[Sustainable Communities](#) – Mayor Josh Maxwell, Downingtown, PA

[Resilient Zoning Code for a Coastal Community](#) – Councilmember Andria McClellan, Norfolk, VA

Empowering Disadvantaged Populations

[West Sacramento On-Demand: Mobility for All](#) – Mayor Christopher Cabaldon, West Sacramento, CA

[Fair Fees and Fines for Vulnerable Residents](#) – Treasurer José Cisneros, San Francisco, CA

[Helping Understand Barriers \(HUB\) Prosecutor Diversion Program](#) – City Attorney Zach Klein, Columbus, OH

Rebuilding Community

[The Law Enforcement Trust and Transparency Act](#) – Councilmember Will Jawando, Montgomery County, MD

[Transit Corridor Opportunity Program \(TCOP\)](#) – Councilmember Nirva LaFortune, Providence, RI

[Mobile Mayor](#) – Mayor Libby Schaaf, Oakland, CA

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