



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SUPERVISORS RIDLEY-THOMAS AND MOLINA CALL FOR
PERMANENT CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMISSION FOR TROUBLED
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**

In a swift response to notice that the U.S. Department of Justice has opened a civil rights investigation into whether Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department deputies have abused inmates, Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina are calling for the creation of a permanent citizen's oversight commission.

The latest probe into the county jails, which will focus specifically on the treatment of mentally ill inmates, significantly expands the federal government's ongoing investigations into the jails. A criminal investigation into allegations of excessive force and other wrongdoing has been underway since 2011. Similar concerns about use of force and abuse by jail deputies are also the centerpiece of the civil probe.

"The seriousness of this new investigation and the allegations of abuse that prompted it cannot be ignored," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "The sheriff's department has long required a level of scrutiny that has been missing, and although the board only controls it's budget, the department is there to serve the citizens of L.A. County, and that's who should have greater oversight."

“Transparency, without question, is needed to ensure that there is proper oversight of the sheriff's department,” said Supervisor Molina. “A sheriff's department oversight commission is the best vehicle to ensure accountability.”

In their motion to establish a Los Angeles County Citizen's Law Enforcement Commission, the supervisors maintain that the new investigation dramatizes the need for heightened scrutiny of the sheriff's department. Continued allegations of excessive force, significant litigation costs and a moral imperative to ensure constitutionally appropriate policing in the jails and communities justifies the establishment of an oversight entity without delay. Structural reform clearly will require more than intermittent and temporary examination of the department.

Although the board's authority over the sheriff, who is an elected official, largely is limited to budgetary matters, the supervisors clearly have the authority to establish an independent advisory citizen's oversight commission – as it has done in the past.

The supervisors' motion, to be voted on at this Tuesday's meeting, calls for each supervisor to appoint a commissioner to the panel by October 15. In addition, it calls for a funding and staffing plan for the commission and for county counsel to cement the commission's role with language formalizing the relationship between the Sheriff's Department, the Office of the Inspector General and the board.

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