



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Extreme Caution Advised in Establishing the Los Angeles County Sheriff's "Truth & Reconciliation Commission"**

Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Sheila Kuehl filed a [motion](#) today directing County Counsel to evaluate the legality of Sheriff Alex Villanueva's proposed "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" as well as similar efforts to reevaluate discipline previously imposed on Sheriff's Department personnel. They asked for a report within 30 days.

The motion also calls for instructing the Sheriff to discontinue unilaterally reinstating fired deputies until all legal questions have been resolved – including appeals.

The Board of Supervisors is expected to vote on the motion March 12.

"The Sheriff's Department needs the public's trust in order to be effective, so ensuring transparency, legality and oversight in this matter are necessary," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. "The men and women of the Department, as well as the people of Los Angeles County, deserve no less."

"There are a lot of unanswered legal questions, not only regarding the Sheriff's reinstatement of a previously dismissed deputy, but also his plans to proceed with a proposed 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission,'" said Supervisor Kuehl. "I need to understand all our legal options. Rolling back reforms adopted by the Department, and doing so without legal authority, cannot be allowed."

In their motion, Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Kuehl said the proposed function of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission “raises several legal issues, including whether the Department has the legal authority to change final disciplinary findings from the Civil Service Commission that were made in conformance with State law, the County Charter, the County Code, and the County’s civil service rules.”

In their motion, Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Kuehl said the Sheriff “has been acting unilaterally to reinstate deputies before setting up a formal process,” adding “the lack of clarity around a process for making what appears to be swift and consequential decisions is concerning.”

In 2013 and 2016, Sheriffs Lee Baca and Jim McDonnell developed Department guidelines to impose stricter discipline for certain types of deputy misconduct, including unreported uses of force, dishonesty, and second incidents of driving under the influence. The changes had been recommended by the Citizen’s Commission on Jail Violence and mandated by federal settlements.

The Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs (ALADS) challenged those guidelines before the County Employee Relations Commission (ERCOM), which has not made a final decision. Sheriff Villanueva, however, appears to have already adopted the union’s position in justifying his recent decision to rehire a deputy discharged for alleged domestic abuse and stalking.

In their motion, Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Kuehl said, “it is premature for the Sheriff to implement policy” regarding the Department’s discipline guidelines, which remain subject to legal challenge. They also said, “Given the Board’s fiduciary responsibility and the exclusive authority of the Board and County Counsel to control civil litigation, it is inappropriate for the Sheriff to unilaterally settle with individual deputies whose discipline has been upheld by the Civil Service Commission.”

They instructed that once the ERCOM decision has been finalized, and legal issues have been resolved, the Sheriff should work with the Civilian Oversight Commission, Inspector General, and County Counsel to “develop and implement a transparent, objective, and evidence-based protocol to evaluate previously-imposed employee discipline.”

The motion added that meaningful involvement of the County’s existing robust and knowledgeable oversight mechanisms and stakeholders is “critical to the public’s trust in the Department.”

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