Los Angeles County Sheriff

The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) at a glance
- Established in 1850 and employs more than 10,000 deputies
- Runs the nation’s largest jail system
- Patrols approximately 2,500 of the county’s 4,000 square miles
- Its oversized budget is about $3.5 billion

Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva pulled a major bait and switch on voters and has...
- Repeatedly violated the law
- Obstructed civilian oversight, defying lawful subpoenas
- Created a “secret police unit” to pursue investigations with the purpose of intimidating and harassing oversight officials, including initiating a criminal investigation of the Inspector General
- Misused county funds to pursue his political agenda
- Overseen a dramatic increase in deputy shootings and record-level deaths in the jails under his watch
- Worsened violations of the Rosas v. Baca consent decree
- ...
In the face of Sheriff Alex Villanueva’s bait-and-switch on immigration, our Check the Sheriff Coalition’s Zero ICE Transfers campaign ended warrantless ICE transfers, once and for all.

- Despite his campaign promises to kick ICE out of the jails, Villanueva kept transferring Angelenos in LASD custody to ICE for immigration detention and deportation. In 2019, during Villanueva’s first year as sheriff, LASD transferred 457 Angelenos to ICE.

- Villanueva refused to stop ICE transfers at the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, endangering many detained people’s lives
In April 2020, we forced Villanueva to issue a moratorium on ICE transfers.

On September 1, 2020, with Sup. Hilda Solis’s leadership, we passed a Board of Supervisors motion to establish a County policy prohibiting all ICE transfers absent a judicial warrant (Ending ICE Transfers Without a Judicial Warrant in LA County).

For a more in-depth narrative: https://www.checkthesheriff.com/zero-ice-transfers
• For more than five decades, tattooed white supremacists, neo-nazi deputy gangs among the ranks and management of LASD have wreaked havoc in Los Angeles, costing county taxpayers at least $100 million since the 1990s.

• Deputy gang members have hunted, framed, beaten, shot, and killed people of color for prestige and membership (“ink”) (e.g., Franky Carrillo was wrongfully convicted and spent 20 years in prison after being framed by a Lynwood Vikings deputy gang member, costing county taxpayers $10 million).
Promoting a "code of silence," Sheriff Villanueva has enabled deputy gangs and problem deputies to engage in greater misconduct and excessive force.

There has been growing investigations and national attention on LASD deputy gangs.
When Villanueva was elected sheriff of L.A. County last year, one of his first orders of business was creating a “truth and reconciliation” process to reinstate officers that had been fired by his predecessor for everything from unreasonable use of force to domestic violence.

Source: https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/villanueva-domestic-violence-mandoyan/
“And what is 80% of my workforce? Conservative and far right.” -- Villanueva

- A couple weeks ago, we learned of the internal LASD communications was shared with the tagline “Go Brandon Go Brandon Go Brandon!!!!!!” — just the most recent demonstration that LASD is a white supremacist institution.

- A recent state audit of five law enforcement agencies — including LASD — found support for far-right extremist groups among their ranks, including for the Proud Boys and the Three Percenters. The report, Law Enforcement Departments Have Not Adequately Guarded Against Biased Conduct — Report 2021-105 (ca.gov), also found in these agencies evidence of bias toward people of color, immigrants, women, and the LGBTQ community — while there was a lack of appropriate policies to root out such bias, investigate allegations, and correct it once identified.
Villanueva's Retaliation Against Anyone Daring to Speak

- Through his "secret police unit," Villanueva even initiated a criminal investigation of the Inspector General Max Huntsman, and later made a wild accusation without a shred of evidence that Huntsman was a "Holocaust denier."

- After L.A. Times reporter Alene Tchekmedyian reported that Villanueva himself directed the cover-up of a deputy kneeling on the head of a handcuffed individual in custody for 3 minutes, Villanueva held a press conference in which he said LASD was criminally investigating the reporter. Only after a huge backlash, Villanueva walked back his earlier statements and tried to gaslight the public.
Andrés Guardado was an 18-year-old Salvadoran-American man shot in the back and was killed by a Deputy Sheriff from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's.

Guardado ran from two uniformed police officers into an alley, where he died after being shot by deputies.

Accounts of the incident are disputed between police and witnesses. Store-owner Andrew Heney reported that several cameras at the scene, including a digital video recorder that stored surveillance footage, were taken and destroyed by police.

Guardado's family are immigrants that fled violence and political instability in El Salvador from the Salvadoran Civil War. His father currently works as a service worker and is a part of the union UNITE HERE Local 11. This is one of many victims.

Watch UNITE HERE Local 11’s video
Harassment of Families Impacted by Sheriff Violence

On an almost daily basis, LASD deputies try to intimidate impacted family members by:

- Driving slowly by or parking in front of their homes and memorial sites
- Damaging items at memorial sites
- Taunting family members with rude comments, gestures, smirks, and laughter; following family members while they are driving
- Parking outside family members’ workplaces
- Taking pictures of or recording family members

Deputies have also engaged in more serious and often illegal forms of harassment on a number of occasions, including:

- Targeting family members for arrest and detention without probable cause,
- Frequently pulling over family members and searching their vehicles
- Harassing family members of minor age.
Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

Villanueva is not the first sheriff to abuse power, and unless we create meaningful mechanisms to hold a sheriff accountable, he won’t be the last.

ACLU SoCal and more than 100 community and labor organizations are urging the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to propose to the voters an amendment to the County Charter that will:

- Create a procedure to allow impeachment and removal of the sheriff
- Reinforce the policy-making authority of the Board and the Civilian Oversight Commission
- Establish permanent, independent, and more robust civilian oversight of the LASD

Video of February 7, 2022 Demand on Board
Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

Coalition sign-on letter: checkthesheriff.com/demandletter
Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

Villanueva’s actions show that the county government structure is inadequate to counter a sheriff who is openly hostile to oversight. The Board of Supervisors, responsible for the health and safety of the public, needs greater mechanisms to rein in any sheriff who abuses power.

It is long past time to amend the county charter to provide that authority. Any reforms should at a minimum: create a process to allow removal of the sheriff for serious misconduct by a super-majority vote of the board; reinforce the board’s ability to guide policy making in the sheriff’s department; and establish permanent, independent civilian oversight.

To make this a reality, the board must act promptly to place the proposed charter amendment on the ballot. To get this issue before the voters in the November election, the process must be completed by early August. If the amendment is approved by voters, it is possible that the sheriff or law enforcement unions may challenge it, especially the provisions allowing for removal of the sheriff by the board. But this authority is appropriate and in line with the text of the California Constitution, state statutes and case law.

Sheriffs have great power, and a sheriff who abuses it has the potential to do tremendous harm. Neither elections every four years nor the theoretical possibility of an expensive recall vote can produce timely accountability and correction when the power of the sheriff’s office is abused.

For many reasons, including the limited transparency of law enforcement records, voters largely lack the detailed information needed to hold sheriffs accountable at the ballot box. Incumbent sheriffs are rarely voted out, and even if there were a change in leadership, accountability and oversight problems remain — as the history of the sheriff’s department makes all too clear.

We also need strong independent civilian oversight to be directly addressed in the county’s charter so that it cannot be eroded by future political leaders. The oversight authority of the Office of the Inspector General and the Civilian Oversight Commission should be memorialized in the county charter, along with subpoena authority and the resources to fulfill their functions.

We don’t need yet another study or blue-ribbon commission, nor can the supervisors wait for uncertain state reforms or another election cycle. Now is the time to act and advance charter amendments that can strengthen the county’s structure of checks and balances. Let’s not wait for more decades of reports that tell us what we already know.

Miriam Aroni Krinsky is a former federal prosecutor and served as executive director of the Citizens’ Commission on Jail Violence. Erwin Chemerinsky is dean of the UC Berkeley School of Law.
Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

Whereas, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) was established in 1850 and employs more than 10,000 deputies, runs the nation's largest jail system, and patrols approximately 2,500 of the county's 4,000 square miles.

Whereas, since LASD's inception, the sheriff has managed the department without any meaningful oversight. This has lead to a lack of accountability and transparency within the LASD. And, as one has witnessed with past and current sheriffs, checks and balances in county administration are weak. Former Sheriff Lee Baca (currently in prison for obstruction of justice) made that clear in 2012 when asked how he is to be held accountable for his conduct in office, he replied "Don't elect me."

Whereas, in an attempt to provide greater oversight of the LASD, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) has implemented accountability measures such as the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence in 2011, the Office of Inspector General in 2014, and this Commission in 2018. Recently, the County supported AB 1506, which requires the California Attorney General to investigate certain deputy shootings. Also, multiple groups are investigating the issue of deputy gangs within the LASD.

Whereas, this Commission has witnessed several efforts to reverse LASD's policies designed to enhance accountability, to wit: there has been a weakening of the disciplinary process, efforts to ensure independent oversight of deputy shootings investigations have been stymied, attempts to intimidate and belittle individuals and entities tasked with providing oversight of the LASD, including initiating a criminal investigation of the county inspector general are ongoing, and the downplaying of the existence of deputy gangs as mere hazing.

WHEREAS, this Resolution seeks to prevent any sheriff from pushing the boundaries of accountability and oversight. Sheriffs have great power, and a sheriff who abuses it has the potential to do tremendous harm.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Commission urges the Board of Supervisors to place a charter amendment on the November ballot to amend the Los Angeles County Charter to create a procedure that will allow the Board of Supervisors to impeach and remove the sheriff by a four-fifths vote for serious violations of the public trust, including, but not limited to, serious crime, unconstitutional conduct, and abuse of power.

Be it further resolved that the Commission urges the Board of Supervisors to place a charter amendment on the November ballot to amend the Los Angeles County Charter to incorporate the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission and the Office of Inspector General into the Los Angeles County Charter, including the power to subpoena records and testimony to fulfill our duty. Permanently fixing the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission and the Office of Inspector General in the Los Angeles County Charter will ensure that civilian oversight remains a permanent body providing oversight to the LASD.

Be it further resolved that the Commission urges the Board of Supervisors to place a charter amendment on the November ballot to amend the Los Angeles County Charter to authorize the Board of Supervisors to oversee and set policies for the LASD, provided that they do not interfere with the statutory authority of the sheriff or otherwise conflict with state law, and create a mandatory process for the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission to recommend policies for the LASD, and for the Board of Supervisors to deliberate on these policies, proceed with any actions necessary and approve final policies.

Dated May 19, 2022

Signature: Sean Kennedy, Chair

Dated May 19, 2022

Signature: Brian K. Williams, Executive Director
Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

HONORABLE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
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WHEREAS, law enforcement misconduct, including by deputies of the L.A. Sheriff, has triggered community resistance and many of the largest episodes of racial violence in LA County’s history, including the uprising and riot after the Rodney King verdicts in 1992, the Watts Rebellion in 1965, and the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 (which had little law enforcement prejudices against racial minorities of the time), and led to the Emancipation of our Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations (“Commission”);

WHEREAS, “equitable law enforcement” is at the heart of our Human Relations Commission’s mission to transform prejudice into acceptance,utherford into justice, and hostility into peace, and is a core concept of our Commission’s report “Redefining Policing with Our Community,” led by its committee on Policing and Human Relations. “Equitable law enforcement” is explained in our report as “a change from unbridled symmetrical power dynamics...to robust, transparent oversight by the communities they serve.”;

WHEREAS, our Commission’s Strategic Priority on Increasing Equity and Justice in LA County’s Criminal Justice and Community Safety Systems and our “Redefining Policing” report take into account the permutations impact of intentional discrimination in our criminal justice system, but also the powerful role of implicit biases that are automatically and unconsciously created in all of us from our life experiences, and have particularly dire consequences when they are not recognized, managed and reduced in law enforcement. As noted in the Commission’s Strategic Priority, “[w]hen the likelihood of being arrested, jailed, shot, executed, or imprisoned after being released from incarceration in LA County is tied to one’s race, ethnicity, gender or other protected characteristics, fundamental human rights are at issue.”;

WHEREAS, our Commission specifically recommends in our “Redefining Policing” report to “[i]mplement all civilian oversight bodies have the necessary authority to perform their mission, including subpoena power and the power to ensure their discipline” (Recommendation 8);

WHEREAS, in the process of creating our report on “Redefining Policing With Our Community,” which included multiple public hearings/community listening sessions in all five Supervisorial Districts, the Commission became aware of many incidents of law enforcement misconduct experienced by community members, and strong community support for effective checks and balances needed to ensure true accountability of the office of the L.A. Sheriff;

Wheresa, the Board of Supervisors has responsibility under law (California Government Code § 25303) for guiding and setting County policy and supervising the conduct of County officers and employees, which include the Sheriff;

THEREFORE, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations resolves and recommends to the Board of Supervisors that it unanimously approve the Promoting Accountability and Community Safety Through Checks and Balances of the Los Angeles County Sheriff motion, and take all actions necessary towards achieving greater accountability of the largely unfettered power of the office of the L.A. Sheriff, reinforcing the Board’s policy making authority regarding the Sheriff’s Department, and ensuring permanent and independent civilian oversight.

Approved by unanimous vote of members of the Commission on July 11, 2022.

Commission President Ilan Davidson
Commission Vice President/Secretary, and Chair of Ad Hoc Committee on Policing and Human Relations Isabelle Gunning

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office of the LA County Sheriff.

Despite the Board of Supervisors’s responsibility under law (California Government Code § 25303) for guiding and setting County policy and supervising the conduct of County officers and employees, which include the Sheriff, the Commission resolves and recommends to the Board of Supervisors that it unanimously approve the Promoting Accountability and Community Safety Through Checks and Balances of the Los Angeles County Sheriff motion, and take all actions necessary towards achieving greater accountability of the largely unfettered power of the office of the L.A. Sheriff, reinforcing the Board’s policy making authority regarding the Sheriff’s Department, and ensuring permanent and independent civilian oversight.

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July 11, 2022

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Commission Vice President/Secretary, and Chair of Ad Hoc Committee on Policing and Human Relations Isabelle Gunning
Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

Sheriff Villanueva moved to the right. A weak election showing now makes him vulnerable

Column: This time, election night is a real party pooper for L.A. County Sheriff Villanueva

After 7 Years of Cover-Ups, Surveillance, and Costly Police Killings, LBPD Critics Say Chief Luna Unfit to Be Sheriff
The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is poised to ask voters for the power to remove an elected sheriff from office.

Under a proposed change to the county’s charter, which would need approval of voters in November’s general election, the board would assume the authority to force out a sitting sheriff if four of the five supervisors agree the sheriff is unfit for office.

The extraordinary move would fundamentally reshape the balance of power in the county and highlight how the relationship between Sheriff Alex Villanueva and county leaders has become strained.

Supervisors Holly Mitchell and Hilda Solis, both vocal critics of Villanueva, have proposed the plan, saying it is needed because the board has been “limited in its ability to serve as a sufficient check against the sheriff’s flagrant disregard of lawful oversight and accountability.”

Supervisor Janice Hahn, who publicly has a more amiable relationship with the sheriff, said she plans to support the proposal, giving Solis and Mitchell the support they need to get the charter amendment on the ballot in November.

In a statement to The Times, Hahn said: “I am going to support this motion. I think the voters have a right to dictate how they want their county government to operate.”

“A proposed charter amendment empowering the Board to remove the sheriff only for cause, would allow the Board to act expeditiously to remove a corrupt sheriff rather than wait for a grand jury to convene or a recall election to be held,” the motion said.

A representative for Supervisor Solis said she planned to vote under the proposal, the board would have the authority to remove a sheriff for serious misconduct, including flagrant or repeated neglect of duties, misappropriation of public funds, willful falsification of an official statement or document, or obstruction of an investigation into the sheriff’s conduct by the Inspector General or Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission.

The obstruction clause is particularly significant as Villanueva has been accused repeatedly of hiding oversight and stonewalling county watchers by refusing to cooperate with their investigations.

Just last week, he and his second-in-command defied subpoenas to testify before the oversight commission during one of its ongoing public hearings into “deputy gangs” that have plagued the department for decades.

Deputies with alleged ties to the groups have been accused of using violent and aggressive tactics, and have cost taxpayers at least $60 million in settlements and payouts in incidents that date to the 1990s.

Andres Kown, an attorney and organizer with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, said Villanueva’s defiance of subpoenas and other resistance to oversight underscore the need for the Board of Supervisors to have the proposed new powers.

“Whatever checks and balances we thought we had for the sheriff are not working,” Kown said. “He certainly won’t be the last — unless we act now.”

Erwin Chemerinsky, a leading scholar in constitutional law and dean of UC Berkeley School of Law, called the proposal a “desirable reform.”

“There must be some method of accountability for the sheriff,” Chemerinsky said by email. “This would create an essential mechanism for accountability and a remedy in egregious situations.”
Closing & What's Next?

Take Action!

1. Sign on to our coalition letter and submit a separate organizational letter to the Board

2. Submit written public comment via: checkthesheriff.com/action

3. Call your Supervisor – see our toolkit: tinyurl.com/CTSToolkitJuly2022

4. Share our tl;dr: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HB5zJ6nb3s

Upcoming Board of Supervisors meetings

- July 26
- August 2