

# 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
  - ...

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## Zero ICE Transfers

### LA COUNTY'S ENTANGLEMENT WITH ICE MEANS:

#### • BAIT AND SWITCH TACTICS •

Sheriff Villanueva campaigned on a platform to "kick ICE out of jails" - only to allow ICE's private contractors to continue the arrests of our community members.

**ICE AGENTS**  
Granted jail access pre-Villanueva

**ICE CONTRACTORS**  
Granted jail access under Villanueva

#### • WASTED SPENDING •

LA County spends \$1.5 million per year defending the rights of immigrants facing deportation - yet spends another \$1.5 million aiding ICE detention and deportation.

**\$1.5M** AIDING ICE DETENTION

+

**\$1.5M** DEFENDING AGAINST ICE

#### • COMPROMISED PUBLIC SAFETY •

Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault are less likely to report crimes and cooperate with law enforcement when law enforcement is entangled with ICE.

**25%**

decline in reports of sexual assault  
from 2016 to 2017

**10%**

decline in reports of domestic violence  
from 2016 to 2017

**LA COUNTY, PROTECT IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES.  
STOP HANDING PEOPLE OVER TO ICE.**

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

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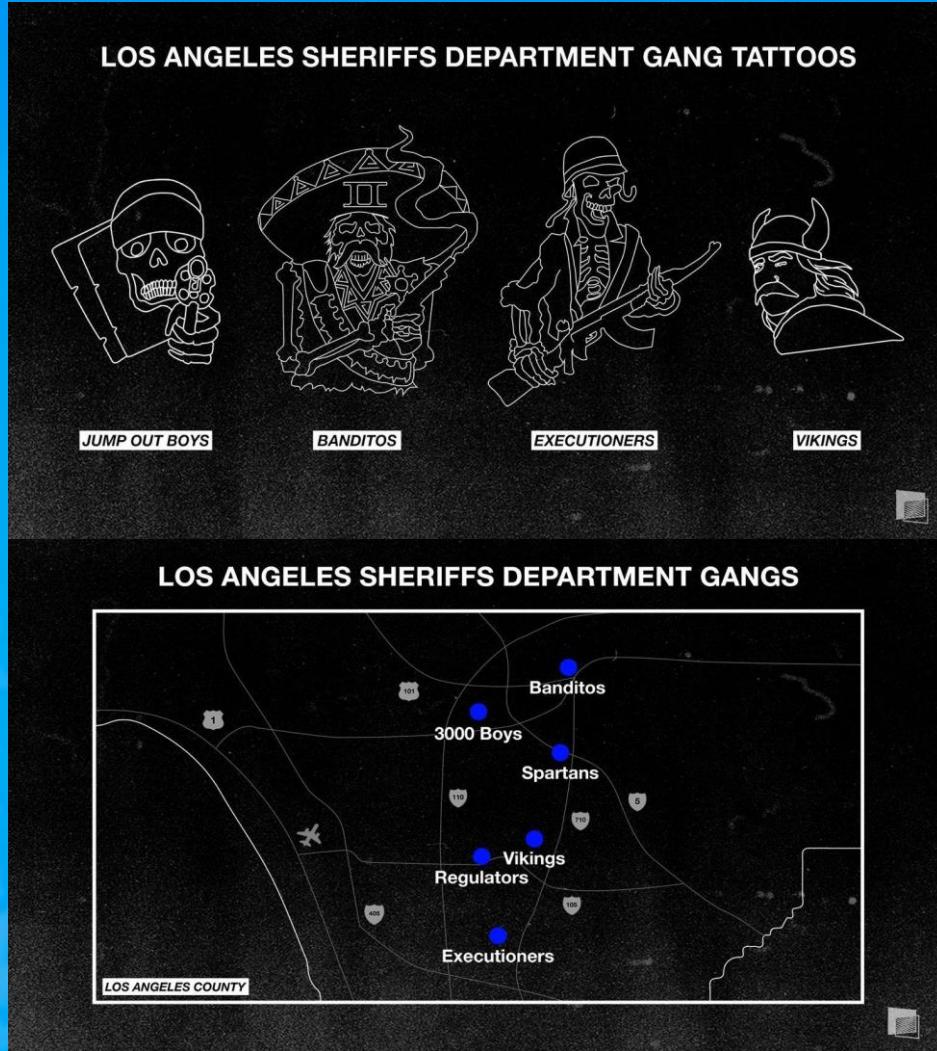
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**LA COUNTY, PROTECT IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES.  
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- In April 2020, we forced Villanueva to issue a moratorium on ICE transfers.
- On September 1, 2020, with Sup. Hilda Solis's leadership, we passed a 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](https://www.checkthesheriff.com/ending-ice-transfers-without-a-judicial-warrant-in-la-county)).

For a more in-depth narrative: <https://www.checkthesheriff.com/zero-ice-transfers>

# #googleLASDgangs



- 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).

LETTER FROM LOS ANGELES JUNE 6, 2022 ISSUE

## THE L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPUTY-GANG CRISIS

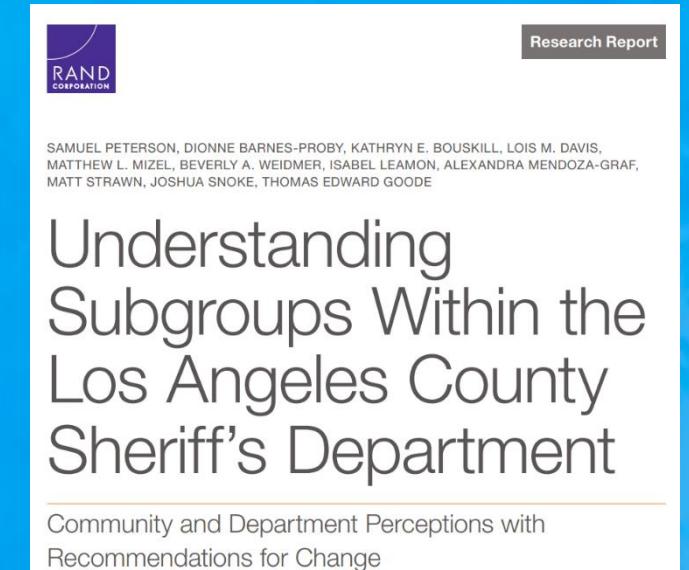
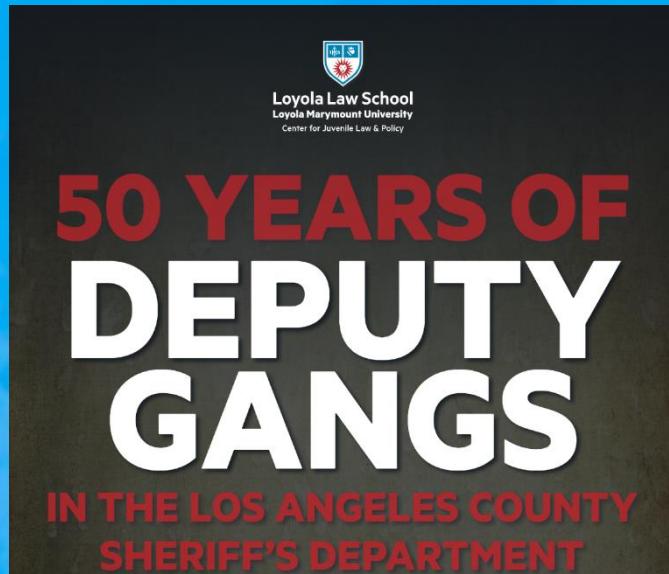
*Whistle-blowers say that a group called the Banditos functions as a shadow government within local law enforcement. The sheriff says there is no such gang in his department.*

By Dana Goodyear  
May 30, 2022



# #googleLASDgangs

- 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.



# TRUMP OF LOS ANGELES

L.A. County Sheriff Alex Villanueva defends reinstating deputy fired over abuse allegations



Caren Carl Mandoyan, second from left, was fired from the L.A. County Sheriff's Department after being accused of domestic abuse and stalking. He was rehired by Sheriff Alex Villanueva after working on Villanueva's campaign. (Mel Melcon / Los Angeles Times)

**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/>

# TRUMP OF LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles Times

CALIFORNIA

Column: 'Go Brandon' joke is latest sign of right-wing extremism in law enforcement



A "Brandon" flag flies March 5 as part of the "People's Convoy" in Hagerstown, Md. (Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO | COLUMNIST

JUNE 13, 2022 5 AM PT

"And what is 80% of my workforce? Conservative and far right." -- Villanueva

- A couple weeks ago, we learned of the internal LASD communications was scared 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 \(ca.gov\)](https://www.ca.gov/2021-105), 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.

# TRUMP OF LOS ANGELES



## 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.

# Complete Disregard for Community Members



**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.**

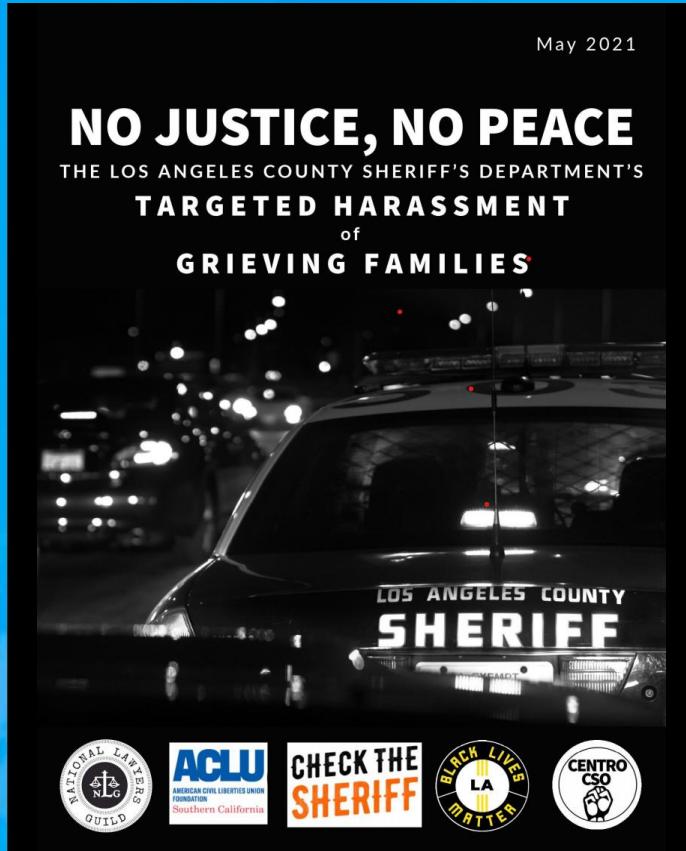
**Accounts of the incident are disputed between police and witnesses. Store-owner Andrew Heney reported that several cameras at the scene, including a digital video recorder that stored surveillance footage, were taken and destroyed by police.**

**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](#)

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## 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.

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

Los Angeles Times

Op-Ed: Villanueva has unchecked power in the sheriff's office. This can be fixed



Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva speaks at a press conference on March 29.  
(Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

BY MIRIAM ARONI KRINSKY AND ERWIN CHEMERINSKY

APRIL 15, 2022 3:15 AM PT

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](#)

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

# Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

7.2022

To: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Re: L.A. County Charter Amendment for Accountability, Oversight, and Checks and Balances of the Sheriff and the Sheriff's Department

“GODFATHER” (L.A.). The most recent spate of gang violence has thrown a spotlight on this case, which has made headlines for decades and demands at times and proportions unprecedented by the board of Supervisors. Despite many other, more serious cases of police violence, the killing of 15-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., has led to a national outcry that provides meaningful and consistent dialogue when it comes to abuse, arrest, and killing. Among them, Sheriff Valenzuela’s range of actions, violent as they are, fall short of those of Ferguson police chief Darren Wilson. The killing of Brown has led to a national outcry that Sheriff Valenzuela has gone from denying the relevance of existing laws to openly defying them. The killing of Brown has led to a national outcry that Sheriff Valenzuela is a law unto himself, the wild west defying relevance and existing laws to the point of impunity. The killing of Brown has led to a national outcry that Sheriff Valenzuela is a law unto himself, the wild west defying relevance and existing laws to the point of impunity. The killing of Brown has led to a national outcry that Sheriff Valenzuela is a law unto himself, the wild west defying relevance and existing laws to the point of impunity. The killing of Brown has led to a national outcry that Sheriff Valenzuela is a law unto himself, the wild west defying relevance and existing laws to the point of impunity.

The Board must seize this moment and take decisive actions to protect the public from the effects of deputy grants, sheriff's violations of the law and obstruction of oversight, and the underlying conditions leading to unchecked deputy misconduct and violence, particularly those that have been communicated publicly to LASD. The undersigned stakeholders urge the Board to propose to the voter an amendment to the L.A. County Charter that will create an independent and neutral process to provide comprehensive review checks and balances over the sheriff, reaffirm its policymaking authority over LASD, and strengthen civilian oversight.

of the sheriff, and the statements of the sheriff's wife. The Board has a duty to supervise the conduct of the sheriff's family and their leases, and it has the ultimate responsibility for the safety of the public. The Board currently has no meaningful mechanisms to enforce this

anonymity, or even to take action against a chief who directly violates the law.<sup>3</sup> A "soft" election system of ideal recognition every four years has proven wholly ineffective. The public has been silent about this problem. The U.S. Congress has failed to respond to it and no one, as I shall present, has suggested a way to correct the error in its original drafting. Besides the United Nations, there is no international organization that can be expected to direct the Central American Commission, or to force a hard line on its members.

**Reference:** *The Board's responsibility to create policy for [LAND] and designate funding priorities in the CCR.* In this case, the authority under section 8(1)(b) of the Charter "to vote to ensure that they have the power to plan, fund, and manage its functions" also requires the authority to create and approve the development of policy for [LAND].

**Example:** The [LAND] County Council has established a CCR. It is a result of the CCR that the authority has adopted a policy for [LAND] that is based on a range of numerous social, cultural, and financial needs. The proposed [LAND] County Charter recommendations should further codify the authority of the above to oversee and set policy for [LAND] so that it does not interfere with the statutory authority of the CCR to create and manage its functions with respect to [LAND]. Nevertheless, the [LAND] County Charter recommendations should also ensure that the CCR is held accountable for its transparency and accountability with respect to [LAND] — to develop and propose policies for the Board's consideration and action.

Establish permanent, independent, and more robust civilian oversight of LASD. To make sure that force does less harm to civilians over time than it does to the existing oversight bodies, the proposed measure should explicitly incorporate the COC and the Office of Inspector General into the LA County Sheriff, including authority to subpoena records and testimony as needed to fulfill their functions.<sup>27</sup> The proposal should provide the COC with independent control and funding commensurate with its duties, and ensure membership of community members directly appointed by LASD and the civilian legal system.

Call for entries: Deadline for the 2013 Call for Papers: Staff report on the official conduct of 20 issues, effectively managing the functions and roles of media outlets. – *After the news gathering, editing, management and publishing* (Croatian Social Sci., Ed. Cen., Cate., Cogit., 2013). The board shall verify that the author is the author of the article and that the article has not been published elsewhere. *Call for entries: Deadline for the 2013 Call for Papers: Staff report on the official conduct of 20 issues, effectively managing the functions and roles of media outlets. – *After the news gathering, editing, management and publishing* (Croatian Social Sci., Ed. Cen., Cate., Cogit., 2013). The board shall verify that the author is the author of the article and that the article has not been published elsewhere.* (A. TROŠA (Ed.), 2013: 383).

**Coalition sign-on letter: [checkthesheriff.com/demandletter](http://checkthesheriff.com/demandletter)**



# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

**Los Angeles Times**

Op-Ed: Villanueva has unchecked power in the sheriff's office. This can be fixed



Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva speaks at a press conference on March 29.  
(Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

BY MIRIAM ARONI KRINSKY AND ERWIN CHEMERINSKY

APRIL 15, 2022 3:15 AM PT

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.

Protect your home  
**AliExpress**

PAID CONTENT

**Affordable Products To Improve Your Home's Security**

By Los Angeles Times

Home is a haven for everyone, so it's essential to do everything to keep it secure. Luckily, several products can help improve your home's surveillance.

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.*

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability



### Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission



#### Resolution in Support of Los Angeles County Charter Amendment

The Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (Commission) hereby resolves as follows:

**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.<sup>1</sup>

**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."<sup>2</sup>

**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 2016. 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,<sup>3</sup> efforts to ensure independent oversight of deputy shootings investigations have been stymied,<sup>4</sup> 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,<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

**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 no 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.

May 19, 2022

Dated

Sean Kennedy, Chair

Brian K. Williams, Executive Director, Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, does hereby certify that the above is true and correct copy of the Resolution duly adopted by the Commission at its meeting held on May 19, 2022, and as same appears of record in the official Statement of Proceedings of said Commission.

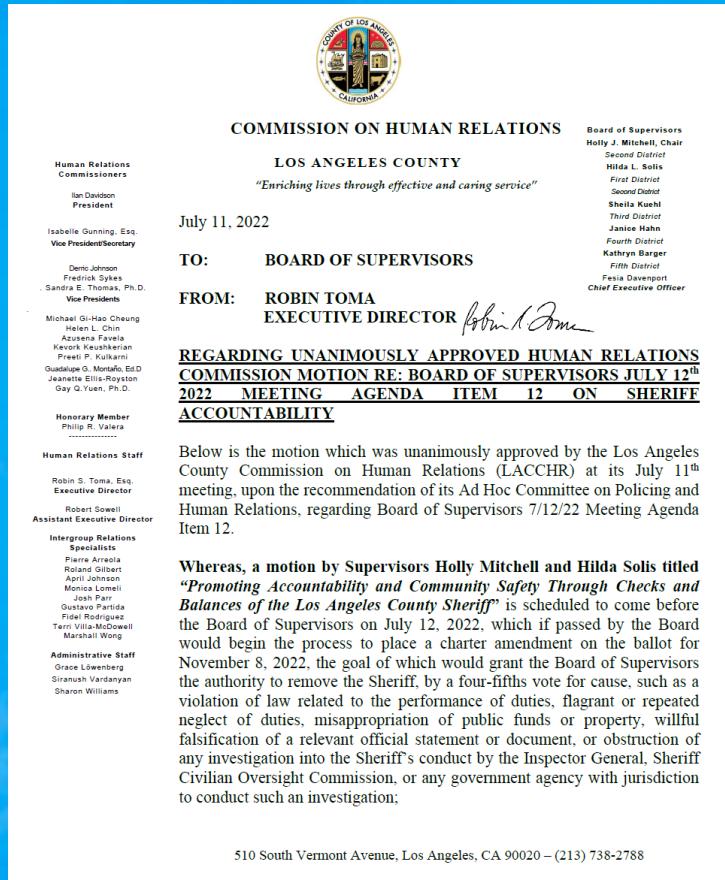
May 19, 2022

Dated

Brian K. Williams, Executive Director

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability



Honorable Board of Supervisors  
Page 2 of 3  
July 11, 2022

Whereas, law enforcement misconduct, including by deputies of the LA Sheriff, has triggered community resistance and many of the largest episodes of racial violence in LA County's history, including the uprising and riots after the Rodney King verdicts in 1992, the Watts Rebellion in 1965, and the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 (which laid bare law enforcement prejudices against racial minorities of the time, and led to the formation 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, inequity 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 unilateral asymmetrical 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 pernicious 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 rearrested 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 "[e]nsure that all civilian oversight bodies have the necessary authority to perform their mission, including subpoena power and the power to censure and/or 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 Supervisoral 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

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
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July 11, 2022

office of the LA County Sheriff;

Whereas, 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 unbridled 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

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

Los Angeles Times

CALIFORNIA

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



Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva speaks to supporters at an election-night gathering in Boyle Heights on Tuesday. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)

BY ALENE TCHAKMEDYAN, CONNOR SHEETS

JUNE 8, 2022 7:09 PM PT

Los Angeles Times

CALIFORNIA

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



Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva talks with reporters as his wife, Vivian, looks at him during an election night gathering in East L.A. on primary night. The incumbent will face challenger Robert Luna in the November general election (Luis Sinco/Los Angeles Times)

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO | COLUMNIST

JUNE 8, 2022 11:56 AM PT



ANALYSIS

2022 ELECTIONS LASD LONG BEACH ROBERT LUNA

After 7 Years of Cover-Ups, Surveillance, and Costly Police Killings, LBPD Critics Say Chief Luna Unfit to Be Sheriff

Long Beach Police Chief Robert Luna's sheriff campaign promises contrast sharply with his controversial record.

Joe Brizzolara and Kevin Flores | December 30, 2021



Graphic by Kevin Flores/FORTHE

In collaboration with FORTHE

# CHECK THE SHERIFF

## Charter Amendment for Sheriff Accountability

**Los Angeles Times**

CALIFORNIA

L.A. supervisors poised to ask voters for power to remove sheriff from office



Lisa Vargas, mother of Anthony Vargas who was fatally shot by sheriff's deputies in 2017, speaks at a rally in 2019 calling for more accountability for the sheriff. (Ana Venegas / For The Times)

BY ALENE TCHEKMEDYAN | STAFF WRITER  
JULY 7, 2022 UPDATED 5:36 PM PT

BY ALENE TCHEKMEDYAN | STAFF WRITER  
JULY 7, 2022 UPDATED 5:36 PM PT

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 reshuffle the balance of power in the county and highlights how [bitter and dysfunctional](#) the relationship between Sheriff Alex Villanueva and county leaders has become.

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 amicable 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 Sheila Kuehl would not say how 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 flouting oversight and [stonewalling county watchdogs](#) 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.



CALIFORNIA

Former sheriff's official says he was duped into covering up Banditos' role in assault

July 1, 2022

Deputies with alleged ties to the groups have been accused of using violent and aggressive tactics, and have [cost taxpayers at least \\$55 million](#) in settlements and payouts in incidents that date to the 1990s.

Andrés Kwon, an attorney and organizer with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, said Villanueva's defiance of subpoenas and other resistance to oversight underscores 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," Kwon said.

He added that Villanueva is not the first sheriff to raise such alarms. Lee Baca went to prison for obstructing a federal investigation into jail abuses.

"Villanueva wasn't the first," Kwon 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](http://checkthesheriff.com/action)

3. Call your Supervisor – see our toolkit:  
[tinyurl.com/CTSToolkitJuly2022](http://tinyurl.com/CTSToolkitJuly2022)

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

## Upcoming Board of Supervisors meetings

- July 26
- August 2