

DEPUTY SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY



The Strength Behind the Badge

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NEWS RELEASE

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The Deputy Sheriffs' Association of San Diego County (DSA) has been working with the Sheriff's Department, the county budget CAO, and the Board of Supervisors to address the staffing crisis facing our agency.

This problem is not one that we face alone. Law Enforcement agencies across California have similar issues with the recruitment and retention of deputies. The San Diego County Sheriff's Department has implemented mandatory overtime (MOT) to fill critical staffing shortages. The DSA recognizes that MOT is necessary to fill critical staff shortages to provide the highest quality public safety services to everyone in San Diego County.

As the largest law enforcement agency in San Diego County, we feel the effects of retirements, and resignations on an unprecedented level, and we are not catching up. For fiscal year 21-22, the Sheriff's Department lost 339 deputies. In that same year, they hired 230 deputies to fill those vacancies. This was a net loss of 109 deputies in the 12-month span. In fiscal year 22-23, they lost another 252 deputies, and despite aggressive recruitment efforts, they were only able to hire 245 deputies. The Sheriff Department's recruiting efforts are simply unable to hire deputies at a rate that exceeds the retention loss. Over the last 24 months, they lost 591 deputies, hired 475 deputies, with an overall decrease of 116 deputies. This added to the already understaffed department puts them at 300 deputies short of being fully staffed.

To put that into perspective, the estimated cost to hire one deputy sheriff is astounding. When the county hires a deputy, the applicant completes an extensive background investigation, including hours of investigative time, psychological testing, medical exams, attending the required academy, and field training, before being able to function as a solo deputy. This process takes approximately one year and costs an estimated \$120,000 to backfill a single position. A deputy sheriff is an extremely expensive county resource. Recruitment, without also addressing the retention of our current employees, is the most expensive revolving door the county funds.

The cost to replace the 591 deputies lost over the past two years represents a potential cost to the county of nearly 70 million dollars. Even with that cost, the Sheriff's Department risks many of these new deputies not staying with the department, due to the staffing shortages and low morale. Mandating overtime on already tired and overworked deputies has taken a severe toll on these dedicated men and women and directly impacts the quality of service provided to the public and diminishes our ability to protect some of the most vulnerable populations, especially those incarcerated in our detention facilities.



Nearly all deputies and sergeants (with few exceptions) have been required to work an extra twelve and one-half hours per pay period (two weeks). For context, the average county employee works eighty hours per pay period while all deputies are required to work eighty-five hours per pay period. With the added mandatory overtime, those deputies are now required to work ninety-seven and one-half hours every two-week pay period.

For several years, deputies assigned to detention facilities had been required to work twenty-five hours, each pay period. That is equivalent to one hundred and ten hours every pay period. Not only does mandating overtime reduce much-needed time off with family, but it also encourages deputies to seek other employment opportunities with higher salaries and better staffing. Furthermore, the stress induced by mandated overtime has led to higher rates of divorce, depression, and substance abuse. In a career that already takes an emotional toll on its workforce, simply forcing employees to work more is unacceptable.

The Sheriff's Department implemented a wellness unit to assist deputies who are facing personal struggles in their lives and the DSA is fully supportive of this new unit and the efforts of the Sheriff to provide services to our deputies in need.

The mission statement is as follows, "We provide the highest quality public safety service to everyone in San Diego County". As the DSA of San Diego County, the 2,250 deputies that make up this organization embrace and support this noble mission; however, we are very concerned that many of the collaborative ideas raised by members of this department, and the DSA board of directors has done nothing toward reaching a shared collaborative solution to the problem at hand.

The DSA has reviewed staffing reports/data and it's clear that hiring qualified candidates to staff our detention facilities is one of the department's biggest challenges. This position has a lower starting salary, and it is more difficult to recruit and retain deputies assigned to jail facilities. A deputy Sheriff assigned to a detention facility is unable to adequately perform their duties without sufficient staffing. Newly hired deputies frequently leave the department because of the low pay and poor working conditions, coupled with the demands of their assignment, it simply is not worth the sacrifice. Nearly all of the 300 open positions are in the Detentions Service Bureau.

Mandatory overtime has proven to be completely unsustainable and has been a key driver in why many deputies continue to leave the department. We must address the serious critical staffing issues in the department and focus our funding on the retention of deputies. Recruitment without retention has not been working for many years and is and will be an extremely costly expense to the residents of this great county.



The DSA implores the county collaborate, support, and encourage the Sheriff's Department to investigate and implement extreme solutions to ensure they continue to provide the highest quality public safety services without sacrificing their dedicated deputies, and the communities we have sworn to protect.

We understand the financial cost is high. However, as seen in many other communities across the nation, a failure to reverse the staffing crisis in law enforcement will cost exponentially more. Without sufficient funding to incentivize retention and recruitment, the Sheriff's Department is at risk of failing to live up to its mission of providing the highest quality public safety services.

The Deputy Sheriffs' Association mission is to promote the professionalism in law enforcement by providing service to the community and working with the department and the county to represent deputy sheriffs of all ranks in negotiating and protection of their rights.

The DSA will continue to collaborate and work in partnership on all solutions that will improve the quality of life for the members of our association.