

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 05, 2023**

**MINUTE ORDER NO. 32**

**SUBJECT: CONDUCT COMPREHENSIVE FISCAL STUDY FOR SOLUTIONS TO  
IMPROVE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY  
SHERIFF DEPUTIES (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

**OVERVIEW**

Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer has been working closely with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, District Attorney's Office, and community advocates to get guns and drugs off the streets, stop human trafficking, and increase community policing to prevent property crimes and smash-and-grab robberies. Investing in local public safety services to prevent crime and make neighborhoods safer means investing in our Sheriff's Deputies. The Sheriff's Department has found it difficult to recruit and retain new Deputies. To ensure adequate staffing and prevent burnout, it is vital we examine every option possible to keep trained and experienced Deputies on our streets and in our detention facilities.

Simultaneously, over the past three years, Supervisor Lawson-Remer has aggressively taken several actions to protect justice-involved individuals in our County's care, including making inmate calls free to improve access to human connection, dramatically increasing mental health services and staffing in detention facilities to reduce tragic jail deaths, and expanding fentanyl treatment and harm reduction and other substance abuse prevention programs for incarcerated individuals. She further championed a groundbreaking initiative of safety through services to reduce recidivism, save taxpayer resources, give justice-involved individuals pathways to rehabilitation, and keep our communities safe yet jail deaths continue in part due to staffing challenges and stemming from shortfalls in retention and recruitment. Providing the appropriate level of support for our public safety employees, including Sheriff's Deputies, is vital in ensuring we can properly and effectively care for the people in custody, protect our communities and serve the people in San Diego County.

Our San Diego County Sheriff, Kelly Martinez, has a comprehensive plan to modernize our jails which will help improve the level of medical, mental health, and addiction treatment delivered in our jails. As we continually look to make strides in the quality of care of the detained, we have already taken action to support Sheriff Martinez in her Department's recruitment of new personnel, but the Sheriff's Department has still found it difficult to recruit and retain new Deputies. This Board must do more to support our Sheriff's Deputies to continue making the previously stated progress. Improving the Deputies work environment, preparing them to better interact with people in our County's care, and properly training any incoming members of the workforce will help us successfully recruit and retain high-caliber people; while also working to prevent jail deaths and reduce recidivism by supporting incarcerated individuals in our County's custody with better supervision, services, and programs.

To achieve these goals, we must thoroughly evaluate every fiscally responsible way we can help to improve staff capacity and wellness. A Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) is one example of a potential solution to the recruitment and retention challenges for safety members in the County of San Diego's retirement program, including those members in the San Diego Sheriff's Department.

As a leader committed to fiscal responsibility, Supervisor Lawson-Remer strategically seeks the most cost-efficient avenues to address critical workforce challenges. With an astute understanding of fiscal management, she consistently explores innovative, cost-neutral approaches to bolster recruitment and retention strategies for law enforcement and safety personnel. Her emphasis on a cost-neutral approach underscores her dedication to implementing impactful measures without compromising the County's fiscal stability.

The purpose of this Board Letter is to undertake a comprehensive fiscal study aimed at evaluating the feasibility of implementing a DROP for all County safety members in the retirement program, including those safety members within the San Diego Sheriff's Department. A thorough analysis of DROP options should consider the potential to alter employment patterns and the risk of unforeseen financial strains on pension systems, as evidenced by other governments' experiences. The central purpose of this study is to ascertain whether such a program would operate in a cost-neutral manner as a benefit option under the San Diego County Employees Retirement Association. This initiative aligns with our commitment to responsible financial stewardship while also recognizing the importance of offering retirement options that benefit both our valued law enforcement personnel and the community they serve.

Today's action aligns with our commitment to responsible financial stewardship while also recognizing the importance of offering retirement options that benefit both our valued law enforcement personnel and the community they serve.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

##### **VICE-CHAIR TERRA LAWSON-REMER**

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with an actuarial consultant to provide cost neutral options of a Deferred Retirement Option Program for the County, applicable for safety members of the retirement program that is consistent with the County Employees Retirement Law of 1937 (CERL), and report back to the Board of Supervisors with the results of the analysis in 12 months.

#### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

As we aim to bring proposals forward that are designed to advance fairness and equity and create better outcomes for underserved and diverse communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system and reduce justice involvement, incarceration, recidivism, and longstanding disproportionalities, we must properly invest in the capacity of our agents of public safety to do their jobs.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

Implementing a Deferred Retirement Option Program that will benefit safety members of the retirement program, including those within the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, Probation Department and District Attorney's Office, holds the potential to enhance long-term sustainability by mitigating recruitment and retention challenges. By fostering a more attractive work environment for law enforcement personnel, the policy aims to reduce turnover, optimize resource allocation, and contribute to the overall resilience and effectiveness of the County Departments.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24 Operational Plan for Finance Other. This request will result in an estimated one-time cost of \$250,000. The funding source is existing one-time General Purpose Revenue. At this time, there is no impact to net General Fund costs, and there will be no additional staff years.

## **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

### **ACTION:**

ON MOTION of Supervisor Lawson-Remer, seconded by Supervisor Vargas, the Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with an actuarial consultant to provide cost neutral options of a Deferred Retirement Option Program for the County, applicable for safety members of the retirement program that is consistent with the County Employees Retirement Law of 1937 (CERL), and report back to the Board of Supervisors with the results of the analysis in 12 months, with a first phase review report back to the Board by August 31, 2024.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

State of California)  
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



**Signed**  
by Andrew Potter