

Ramirez, Angelica

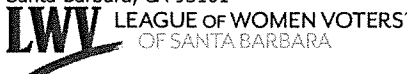
Public Comment - Public Safety

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DIST

**From:** Vijaya <vjinsb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 9, 2021 4:53 PM  
**To:** sbcob; Williams, Das; Hart, Gregg; Hartmann, Joan; Nelson, Bob; Lavagnino, Steve; County Executive Office  
**Subject:** LWVSB on April 12 Budget Workshop for Public Safety  
**Attachments:** 2021 4\_9 County Budget meetings PFT.docx

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Please find, attached, comments from the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara (LWVSB).

*Vijaya Jammalamadaka (she, her)*  
*President*  
805-462-7126  
**Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy**  
328 E. Carrillo Street, Suite A  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  




April 9, 2021

TO: Das Williams, First District  
Gregg Hart, Second District  
Joan Hartmann, Third District  
Bob Nelson, Fourth District and Chair  
Steve Lavagnino, Fifth District

Re: Budget Workshop for Public Safety

Chair Nelson and Supervisors,

The League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara supports a careful review of and changes to the 2021-2022 budget requests, particularly the budget of the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department. Reductions in the Sheriff's Department can provide needed funds to accomplish positive, justifiable goals for a corrections system that has rehabilitation as its primary goal. In 2019-20, 57% of those held in our jails were not yet sentenced. Thus, the pandemic has demonstrated that the jail population can be reduced. The reduction this past year indicates that we do not need to have these numbers increase. The county can have substantial savings by holding the jail population to a target of 550 (the 37% reduction achieved during COVID 19).

We understand that our Sheriff sometimes overspends and the County (taxpayers) end up providing more funding to cover the overage. The Sheriff Department budget has consumed roughly 60% of the criminal justice budget in 2019-20. At \$154.8 million, this was \$26.7 million OVER the sheriff department budgets of comparable California counties with 165 full time equivalent staff (FTEs) more than benchmark averages. This year the request for 2021-22 is \$177 million and increases in FTEs by 17 to 754 full time staff equivalents. We believe that our Sheriff Department has the means to monitor its spending and if they overspend, they should find the means within their own budget to "make ends meet."

Programs which provide alternatives to incarceration, such as those in the Public Defenders Office, can help meet the goal of reducing recidivism and provide community members with the opportunity to have productive lives, a preferable societal outcome to continued emphases on jails and prisons. Therefore, we believe that a dramatic increase in funding is appropriate for the Public Defenders Office.

Our Community Defender Division with a Client-Centered Approach is successful; however, it is funded by grants. It is imperative that this successful program be folded into the criminal justice system in our county. The Public Defender Division needs more social workers, more behavioral wellness specialists, more multilingual front-line staff, more funds for translation and more resources in our North County area. These programs also address some of the issues of equity for the Black, Indigenous, and Latinx members of our community—a serious concern for many years and magnified by this past year's events.

We have reviewed the KPMG document and commend the County leaders for initiating this review. It should provide guidance in developing a budget for the criminal justice departments in our county that better meets the needs of our residents. We sincerely hope that you will use this information judiciously as you address the budget requests of our county departments this year.

Lastly, we believe that the implementation of a Civilian Oversight Commission for the Sheriff's Department would involve the community in understanding and contributing to the criminal justice system we have in the county. Both the community and the Sheriff's Department members would have the opportunity to learn from each other. It would also improve accountability and transparency, deter police misconduct, and reduce costly lawsuits.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Please contact Pam Flynt Tambo, LWVSB Social Policy Committee Chair if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vijaya Jammalamadaka". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vijaya Jammalamadaka, President