

CIVILIAN REVIEW BOARD FAQ

Q. What is a civilian review board?

A. A group comprised solely of civilians who are appointed by government officials to make decisions and provide oversight to an organization or department externally. They exist to be the voice of the community by implementing reforms and improving department services. Most boards work directly with an Inspector General who audits, investigates, and oversees the department's handling of complaints and conducts other investigations as directed by the board.

Q. Why does the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department need one?

A. The LASD is the largest sheriff's department in the country overseeing the largest jail system in the world. They have a history of violence, brutality, and scandal, culminating in several lawsuits by the ACLU and a jail violence probe by the FBI that ended in 18 deputy indictments.

Q. What oversight does the LASD currently have?

A. After a recommendation by the Citizens Commission on Jail Violence over a year ago, The Board of Supervisors decided to create an Inspector General that would oversee the sheriff's department, but he has since had trouble accessing documents and currently has no civilian review board to direct him.

Q. So do we have a civilian review board or not?

On December 9th, 2014 the county Board of Supervisors voted in favor of a civilian review board, but they haven't implemented it yet. They appointed a working group of 7 people to decide the size, scope, and authority of the board who are currently meeting biweekly and plan to make their recommendations this spring.

Q. What about the sheriff?

A. Unlike the Chief of Police, the sheriff's powers are granted by the state constitution and he is subjected to no real oversight at all. He never even needs to appear at a Board of Supervisors hearing or send the supervisors a report unless he deems it in his interest to do so, which is why it is critical that the civilian review board has the power to subpoena documents and deputies as well as investigate complaints independently.

Q. Do other cities have a civilian review board?

A. Yes! Over 100 oversight agencies exist around the country that have community appointed members, subpoena powers, independent investigative powers, and don't allow law enforcement to serve on the boards.

Q. Who would be on the board?

A. Our goal is to have a nine-person board with five members appointed by the county Board of Supervisors and four members appointed by community organizations.

Q. What power would they have?

A. The Board of Supervisors has the authority to grant the future civilian review board subpoena power and independent investigative power so that they can act on complaints externally. The current working group can recommend that the board be granted these powers.

Q. How can I help?

A. **Please contact your district county supervisor and the seven working group members and demand these five non-negotiable conditions for the civilian review board: subpoena power, independent legal counsel, a nine member board with four members appointed by the community, no law enforcement serving on the board, and that the board guide the work of the Inspector General.** The working group meetings are open to the public, so you can sign up for public comment and show your support in person.

For more info please visit dignityandpowernow.org.