

We made it to April and once we thaw out and dry out from the major rain and snowfall- I look forward to enjoying some sunny spring weather! It's been a winter for the record books! Deputies who patrol the mountains and have had to maneuver around all kinds of weather will enjoy summer soon!

Sorting through the K-9 Bill

Recently, many law enforcement officers have expressed concerns about Assembly Bill 742, proposed by Corey Jackson, D-Perris (Riverside County). When he presented the bill, a news release sent out by his office claimed it “aims to end a deeply racialized and harmful practice that has been a mainstay in America’s history of racial bias and violence against Black Americans and people of color”. Jackson agreed about the value of canines, to an extent. “I agree that they are a useful tool,” he said. “They are a useful tool for drug detection. They are a useful tool for search and rescue. There are a whole host of things that they are very useful for. But the problem is that they are also very good at inflicting serious injury. And it is up to the public. It is up to their representatives in Sacramento to determine what is the appropriate use of anything law enforcement does,” Jackson continued.

Jackson said there are not uniform K-9 standards across the state.

The proposed law would still allow police canine use for “search and rescue, explosives detection, and narcotics detection that do not involve biting.”

“Police canines have roots in slavery and have been used as tools of oppression for Black, Brown, and other communities of color,” said Rick L. Callender, President of the California Hawaii NAACP, in a news release.

Jackson said that “active bias is a fact in the world.”

AB742 has been met with resistance from law enforcement leaders across the state, including the Central Valley.

Fresno County Sheriff John Zaroni said police canines “make our community safer”. He also said, “they are vital to the safety of officers. They are vital to searching buildings. They are vital to keeping our community safe because the people that these dogs are going after are people that are violent, people that have committed serious crimes and people that are not following orders or commands of law enforcement- and they’re resisting law enforcement.”

Fresno Police Chief Paco Balderrama said the proposed law “is misguided and goes too far.” He said canines are mainly used for their sense of smell. “Just a bark can lead to a peaceful surrender,” continued Balderrama. “By eliminating the use of K9s in these areas, it will reduce safety for police officers and increase the likelihood of force. With the ability to smell 10,000 times better than humans, police K9s are an invaluable asset

when locating hidden suspects and providing protection to both our officers and our community.”

Clovis Police Chief Curt Fleming says it would be a “huge loss” if his department could not use canines. “It achieves safety for our officers to have those canines go in to a house and clear it out before officers’ lives are put at risk. And to take that tool away would be terrible. So, I hope that does not happen,” Fleming said.

Assemblymember Jackson said he doesn’t believe the argument that canines help save lives. “I don’t think that general statement actually helps to solve this problem. The question is, are we OK with police canines seriously injuring, lifelong injuries, given to people who have yet to be proven guilty?” Jackson said. “I don’t think it’s OK to put a canine in a position to be shot, to be killed, to be hurt as well.”

Jackson, who earned high-level degrees in social work, said he did not speak to law enforcement when crafting the bill.

Peace Officer’s Research Association of California (PORAC), is taking an *Active Oppose* position on the bill. This means we do not support the bill or its contents, and we actively work with law makers to vote NO on the bill.

The truth about the K-9 Bill

I would like to address the misnomer that the bill is ‘moving toward passage’ because it came out of the Public Safety Committee. This committee consists of eight members and only two, of which, are law enforcement supporters. The minority group of two voted to *not* let it out of the committee to the floor. However, the remainder voted in favor of the bill’s progression to the floor. The six remaining members are, in fact, supporters of the defund police movement and have voted to allow several anti-police bills out of their committee that have been ultimately killed or vetoed by Governor Newsom, simply due to their overreach.

I want our members to know that PORAC is working hard to kill this bill. I am a part of this group and can assure you that we will not stand around and allow anti-police groups to dictate safety to both the public and officers in the communities we serve. I will update you as soon as new information is available on this bill.

Dispatch Update

I want to give a brief update as to enhancements we are working on for dispatchers to address the continuous recruitment and retention issues.

The Fresno Police Department just announced a historic 14.21% salary adjustment (side letter) for Emergency Service Dispatchers. This is in addition to the negotiated three year- 3/3/3 deal they are already in contract on. Their vacancy rate is hovering around 10%.

Below is a snapshot for Unit 1 members to get an idea of the current state of our dispatch center.

Currently 24 out of 42 dispatcher positions are filled. One of the 24 is out indefinitely.

Below is a bit about recruitment history:

In September of 2021- 87 names were certified from the job announcement. 16 people were hired and three passed the training program. Also- during this same time, three current working dispatchers left the agency – two went to other agencies.

In May of 2022 – another dispatcher took a lateral position at the Reedley Police Department

In October of 2022- 57 names were certified from the job announcement. 13 dispatchers were hired – eight are still in the program. We are hoping five to six additional will be passing the program.

In December of 2022- 37 names were certified from the job announcement. Five were hired. We do not know the success rate yet, as five will be starting the program on April 10, 2023.

Based on the data- it is clear we have a challenge in retaining our dispatch workforce. We must take some measures to combat this ongoing issue- as it seems obvious that more staff will inevitably walk across the street to FPD for better pay.

I am working with the County of Fresno and the Sheriff to see where the will is to fix this issue. This impacts all of us, not just the dispatch center. Dispatchers are the lifeline for the deputies and the first line of communication for the community.

Other Bargaining Issues in the reopener

The Community Service Reopener has been handled and I will update those numbers after they are officially passed by the Board of Supervisors.

The Criminalist Classification is getting closer to closure.

FSO Criminalists, although not in a recruitment retention issue, are behind the norm for our area in comparison to the State DOJ. Not by much, but enough to show the work is more- along with more requests than at the State DOJ level.

FSO Coroners are under a salary study currently by the Fresno County Labor Team.

FDSA Memorial Open House

We will once again be hosting our Open House during Peace Officer Memorial Week in May to honor the families of Fresno County deputies who have died in the line of duty. Mark your calendars for May 4, 2023. The event is from 5:30PM-7:30PM. We will have a host of food, drinks, and dessert to enjoy.

As I close this month's message, I have been reminded lately- the days are long- but the years are short. We have covered a lot of ground over the years and celebrated many accomplishments. We still have a lot of work to do. Every day we continue to show up for you- to serve you as best we can!

Thank you again for allowing me to represent you.

My best,

Eric