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January 15, 2010

City Manager David Cavazos
City of Phoenix
Phoenix City Hall
200 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Re: Protecting the Integrity of the Phoenix Police Department during the Budget Crisis

Dear Mr. Cavazos:

The men and women of PPSLA are keenly aware of the budgetary crisis confronting the city of Phoenix. We have seen the City's request to the department for a fifteen percent budget reduction. Hopefully, this letter will help guide you in your decision making regarding budget reductions of police supervisory personnel. Our objective is to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of one of the nation's most respected law enforcement agencies.

Every year the City is faced with civil rights and negligence lawsuits arising from police conduct. The presence of frontline supervisors like sergeants and lieutenants frequently prevent civil liability and police misconduct. Indeed, supervisors are responsible for implementing and enforcing policies and police standards, developing and mentoring employees, and they are the conduit between the rank and file, police management and the orders of our civilian superiors. The importance of police supervisors cannot be overstated!

You well know the horror stories that have come out of some major market police departments. You are no doubt equally aware of the crushing civil liability that followed. Whether one is talking about the Rampart investigation in Los Angeles or other police corruption investigations in cities like Chicago, Brentwood, Detroit, New York, or Miami, the ultimate reason for the misconduct and subsequent fiscal and reputational damage was linked to inadequate supervision.

We have all seen the sad state of affairs at other police departments around the country. In November 2000, after the Rampart area corruption activities were uncovered, the Los Angeles Police Department was placed under a U.S. Department of Justice consent decree...the grim specter of a consent decree is an unintended effect of a breakdown in police supervision. The LAPD only recently threw off the oppressive yolk of that decree. Why is it that Phoenix has not faced such actions?

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Several police departments in the United States are or have been under federal consent decrees to initiate reforms in their respective agencies. Police departments in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Steubenville, Ohio; Los Angeles, California; Detroit, Michigan; and the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) are or were signatories to separate decrees with the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) and supervised by federal district courts.

<http://www.calea.org/online/newsletter/No92/consentdecree.htm>

The common denominator which brought these agencies to such a humiliating pass was a perception of widespread misconduct which led, either directly or indirectly, to the federal government providing unwanted, court mandated oversight. The Phoenix Police Department has a well deserved national reputation for professionalism and high standards. Yet if our core leaders, the street level supervisors who uphold our proud tradition and demanding standards of conduct are catastrophically reduced, the trust built on the blood and sweat of our employees (past and present) will fade away.

Presently, Phoenix has the minimally necessary ratio of frontline supervisors to officers (over nine officers to one sergeant) and we are well below what national standards suggest. It would be a serious risk to the department's reputation and the city's fiscal position to make any decision that would diminish the ratio of command and control to line officers.

It would likewise be a mistake to manipulate the ratio of supervisor pay to officer pay. Two years ago, PPSLA corrected a long overdue insignificant pay gap between officer and supervisor. With the supervisor corps already stretched, City action to reduce the distinction between supervisor and officer would deal a dangerous blow to morale.

I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss these issues in greater depth and to assist you in helping us maintain the effectiveness and integrity of the Phoenix Police Department. After all, you can't make the best decisions without the best information.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Hafkey
President

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