



R-23

Date: August 24, 2021

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Al Austin II, Eighth District
Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, First District
Councilwoman Cindy Allen, Second District
Councilwoman Suely Saro, Sixth District

Subject: Partnership with the Development of the Law Enforcement Work Inquiry System (LEWIS) Registry

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Recommendation to request City Attorney to draft a resolution in support of the establishment of the Law Enforcement Work Inquiry System (LEWIS) Registry, and request the City Manager to have the Long Beach Police Department partner with the LEWIS Registry at the University of Southern California Price Safe Communities Institute, to help in the development, pilot and Beta-testing of a unified national database that documents all officers who were terminated or resigned due to misconduct.

BACKGROUND:

Following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in May 2020, there were renewed calls for several police reforms, including creating a nationwide registry of law enforcement officers who had been fired for misconduct to curtail the ability of fired officers to be hired elsewhere.

A study published in the Yale Law Journal in April 2020 claimed to be the first systemic investigation of “wandering officers” who were fired by one department and hired elsewhere. In a study of 98,000 full-time law enforcement officers in Florida over 30 years, it found that in any given year, 3% of officers employed at agencies were previously fired.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, authored by Congresswoman Karen Bass, passed the U.S. House of Representatives in March 2021. Among its provisions, the act would create a nationwide police misconduct registry at the Justice Department. However, its prospects for passing the U.S. Senate and becoming law remain uncertain.

The USC Price Safe Communities Institute is working on establishing the first comprehensive, publicly available national catalog to collect data regarding officers fired or who resign because of misconduct. Law enforcement agencies will also be able to access crucial analytical data regarding trends and patterns of potential misconduct causalities.

The database, named for the late civil rights pioneer Rep. John Lewis, is called the Law Enforcement Work Inquiry System (LEWIS) Registry. The objective is to increase the public trust of law enforcement officers serving the community while also helping departments hire the best police candidates. In its final form, the LEWIS Registry will be a blockchain-enabled network database used by all credentialed law enforcement agencies.

Designed to hold police officers and departments accountable and increase public trust in law enforcement, the LEWIS Registry is a trustworthy, transparent and publicly available resource of officers separated due to misconduct. In an effort to promote transparency, the database will document all police officers who were terminated or resigned due to misconduct available details such as excessive use of force, corruption, domestic violence, sexual assault, physical assault, harassment, perjury, hate group affiliation or falsifying a police report.

All information in the registry is drawn from public sources, such as official department statements, court records, police notices, news reports and other open sources. The LEWIS Registry will have a phase one launch in Fall 2021 for public use, with a subsequent law enforcement beta phase in early 2022.

The Long Beach Police Department has been proactive in recent years to implement policies addressing use of force, and in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget, established the Office of Constitutional Policing, to review current practices and recommend proposals that would reimagine traditional policing to foster equitable and constitutional public safety for the entire community.

Long Beach's engagement in the development and implementation of the LEWIS Registry would be another step in our City's commitment to being at the forefront of transparency and providing public safety services in an accountable, effective and innovative manner that meets the community's expectations.

This matter was reviewed by Budget Manager Grace H. Yoon on August 16, 2021.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This recommendation requests City Attorney to draft a resolution in support of the establishment of the Law Enforcement Work Inquiry System (LEWIS) Registry and requests the Long Beach Police Department to partner with the LEWIS Registry at the University of Southern California Price Safe Communities Institute. The requested action is anticipated to have a minimal impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and a minimal impact on existing City Council Priorities. However, as it is a new program with some uncertainty as to what will be required for implementation, the impact on staff hours may be higher. Staff will monitor and report back any concerns and updates as additional information is received.