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Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

**PRESENTATION BY
Hon. Steven Cooley
District Attorney
Los Angeles County**

Topic: The Status of the District Attorney's Office

January 9, 2003

Chairman Philibosian welcomed Mr. Cooley to the meeting and noted his accomplishments while in the District Attorney's Office.

Mr. Cooley thanked the Chair for the introduction and introduced members of his staff, Mr. William Mangan, Director of the Bureau of Management and Budget, Ms. Jacquelyn Lacey, Director Bureau of Central Operations, and Ms. Sharon Matsumoto, Assistant District Attorney with oversight over all of the administrative and management functions of the office.

Mr. Cooley noted that his office is divided into three major components: (1) Line Operation - routine operations from petty theft to murder. It is in turn divided into two components: Bureau of Central Operations and Branch and Area Operations, (2) Special Operations which is divided into the Bureau of Specialized Prosecutions and the Bureau of Fraud and Corruption Prosecutions, (3) Administration which holds the Bureau of Management and Budget. One unaccomplished goal remains the reorganization of the Central District. The public would be better served by the Justice System and the District Attorney's Office through the implementation of Community Based Justice. Mr. Cooley asked Ms. Lacey to further describe this concept

Ms. Lacey commented that the District Attorney's Office is committed to improving its service to the areas comprising the Central District. In her assignment to the Central Los Angeles Area Court she found that the level of justice and how crime was dealt with was different than it was in the suburbs. The District Attorney came up with the idea of breaking up the Central District into three Branch Areas Courts. Comparing the Central District to the suburban districts is like comparing LAX to the outlying airports like Burbank. The service at the suburban airports is more personalized and often more efficient. In the Central District there are about 122 lawyers, 24+ courts that handle trials, another 8 courts that handle preliminary hearings. This encourages a factory like setting with little communication between the components. Cases come in from differing communities and judges are sentencing defendants without respect to the problems of these communities from which they come. The proposal is to turn the "LAX of Courthouses" into a "Burbank"

and divide it into three branch courts.

The new three branches will be named: Central West, Central East and Central South. Each branch will be controlled by a head deputy as the supervisor of that area. The District Attorney is encouraging the courts to divide their operations in to the same three areas in an attempt to get into touch with the communities they serve. The proposal has been presented to all of the justice agencies.

Ms. Lacey feels that one of the reasons that a "Rampart type" situation can exist can be attributed to a lack of continuity of those involved. The way the current system is setup enables the bad actors to be hidden. Dividing up the system will not entail additional cost, but will improve the efficiency of the system while providing the same level of service to the residents of the Central District as is provide to residents of the suburbs. Although there has been some resistance to this proposal. from the courts and the court clerks, the District Attorney feels that this is an important change and will continue to work with everyone involved to encourage its implementation. Ms. Lacey noted that in breaking up the current system a process has been established to insure that case files will be easily identifiable. At this point Ms. Lacey asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Thompson questioned why the term Community Based Prosecution was being used. Ms. Lacey clarified the terms to be Community Based Justice. She feels that this term defines what the Office is trying to do; to get in touch with the community and to get deputies out into the community talking about ways in which to help fight crime.

Commissioner Hill asked Ms. Lacey if this concept has been introduced to the press and what was their response? Ms. Lacey said that the Office was planning to present the concept to the press in the near future.

Commissioner Baltierrez asked how this proposal will affect the employees. Ms. Lacey responded that the employees would be reorganized physically to insure that the teams involved would be in close proximity with each other. This would improve communication and coordination.

Commissioner Lewis asked how the courts have received this proposal. Ms. Lacey commented that the District Attorney has talked with the management of the court system, the Presiding Judge and Assistant Presiding Judge and others, have concerns over workload distribution in the new districts. The District Attorney's Office has shown that while Central takes about 70% of the cases come from these districts, 30% come from outlying areas. This 30% can be used to balance the districts caseloads. The Courts are concerned with their current budgetary concerns. The District Attorney's Office has assisted the courts in implementing new procedures like one day - one jury and moving cases out to trail faster. The District Attorney feels that the new proposal will assist in improving the efficiency of court operations. He also feels that the proposal will not work unless there is consensus between the courts and his Office. Mr. Cooley feels that the branch system being proposed would facilitate the discovery of misdeeds by individual within the system, thus improving the quality and justice while saving money in the process.

Commissioner Thompson questioned why the system doesn't take the judges to the lockup rather than taking the prisoners to the judges? Mr. Cooley responded that there are some judges at the Central Jail, but that they can only process so many individuals. Perhaps any new jail should include a provision for an onsite court room. Ms. Lacey commented that part of the problem may lie in the public access issue. Mr. Cooley noted that case law provides that cases be filed in the district in which the victimization occurred.

Commissioner Oakes felt that it would be valuable to make contact with the press to develop a base of support. Mr. Cooley wants time to allow the courts to come on board before actively taking this approach.

Commissioner Sylva asked about how the District Attorney was using technology to provide information to the public. Mr. Mangan responded that the District Attorney has a web site on which all the documents concerning matters of public business are posted. Internally, for members of the justice system all of the District Attorney's files will be transferred to digital mode for ease of use. This significantly reduces storage costs for the Office and improves service to the District Attorney and the entire justice system.

Commissioner Hill suggested that the Office say why they had received a grant for this project. Mr. Mangan

commented that the project is anticipated to save \$6M in storage costs.

Chairman Philibosian thanked Mr. Cooley and his staff for his informative presentation while recognizing its contribution to the knowledge of the Commission.

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