



HARRIS COUNTY DEPUTIES' ORGANIZATION

5100 Westheimer, Suite 105 • Houston, Texas 77056

TEL: (713) 659-0005 • FAX: (713) 750-0070

Website: www.hcdo.com

July 28, 2017

To All News Media Outlets:

The Harris County Deputies' Organization is adamantly seeking a much needed pay increase for Harris County Sheriff's Deputies as well as better working conditions for Harris County Detention Officers. This is not a plea made on a whim, but a demand that has been studied, documented, and researched that will demonstrate that the Harris County Sheriff's Office Deputies are woefully under-funded below the average for other comparable law enforcement departments. Detention Officers are asked to run and supervise the largest county jail in Texas, administer the largest mental health institution in Texas, and run logistics enough to service an average town and are often times forced to work overtime and double shifts, due to lack of staffing, leading to burn out and resignation as well as conditions that put the inmates and facility at risk. While there are budget constraints across Harris County, there is a reality that an underfunded law enforcement agency jeopardizes the safety of the county.

The population of just the unincorporated portions of Harris County is just over 2 million and growing making it second largest city in Texas by population if it were incorporated. The Deputies and Detention Officers of the Sheriff's Office are asked to serve a land area of 1,198 square miles and also run the Harris County Jail, the third largest county jail in the nation – the largest in Texas.

Included with this press release are statistical tables and graphs summarizing our research into the pay rate across the State of Texas for licensed law enforcement positions. It shows that a Harris County Deputy on average would need a 23.81% pay increase to be at the same average pay as equally licensed and ranked Officers Houston Police Departments. The starting salary at the Sheriff's Office for a deputy is \$44,862 whereas at the Houston Police Department, after the probation period, a rookie officer stands to make \$51,318. On average, starting Deputies would need a 21.93% pay increase to be at the same average pay as the other surveyed jurisdictions but

they are asked to serve a larger population (excluding the Houston Police Department) in a large geographic area with the same hazards, responsibilities, and community outreach as all the other large Texas municipalities. The gap for experienced personnel is also significant with Sheriff Deputy Sergeants needing, on average, an 18.44% raise to be at the same pay as the sampled department Sergeants. Lieutenants would need a 19.07% raise to be at the average for Lieutenants and Captains need a 20.21% increase to be at their counterparts pay, on average. How can the Sheriff's Office expect to recruit, train, and develop the exemplary Deputies that are needed for Harris County as well as retain seasoned and experienced ranked deputies, when the pay and benefits that are offered force Deputies to seek employment in other better paying agencies?

A full time Deputy should not need a full time second job in order to maintain a residence within Harris County. It is a detriment to the citizens of this county that a Deputy with a family must live in surrounding counties in order to just afford a home on their Harris County Salary. It is a well-documented benefit to a community if police, deputies, detention officers, and other first responders can live in and get to know the neighborhoods by building trust and fostering cooperation within the community. It harkens to the time of the local beat cop that knew the ins and outs of the community. While Harris County claims to want local officers in the community, it will always be a shallow hope if a patrol Deputy looking to settle in a home with a new family can only afford to buy in an outlying county.

The task of serving and protecting all the citizens of Harris County is a monumental undertaking but a very necessary one. Serving and protecting is a task that the men and woman of the Sheriff's Office willingly take on and shall never shirk from, but, like all employees, we may question if we are being justly compensated for our service. During this time of state-wide law enforcement growth, the best and the brightest recruits, deputies, detention officers, and command staff are at a premium across the state. It is impossible for the Sheriff's Office to retain the high quality personnel that the job and the public demand when a Deputy in Harris County can easily make significantly more money for their families doing the same job for a different department elsewhere in the State. The job of law enforcement, with its training and responsibility, demands high quality candidates and it is what the community deserves.

The Harris County Deputies' Organization is concerned and is requesting the County Commissioners to seriously consider how far behind Sheriff personnel are in pay and what that means for the future of Law Enforcement in Harris County. Sheriff Deputies are legislatively mandated to serve and protect all of Harris County. They cannot and will not pick and choose the crimes they will investigate. They will not shrink from the needs of this nation's most diverse and complex community. The proud men and woman of the Harris County Sheriff's Office vigilantly protect the community. It is the duty of the Commissioner's Court to provide and ensure the safety of all of Harris County with a Sheriff's Office that is staffed by a diverse, competent, and qualified staff of Deputies and Detention Officers. We are not asking for more, we are just asking to be paid the same as our peers across the state, and for sufficient staffing for our Detention Officers. With all the perils of our region, with smuggling, gangs, and property crimes on the rise, the choice of whether to have the best people be on the front lines is a choice Harris County cannot afford to not make.

The increase in pay for all Sheriff Deputies is equal to about a dollar a month per Harris County citizen. Is a dollar a month worth it to have the safety each citizen deserves? It is a question the County Commissioners must decide for every citizen of Harris County.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Cuevas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Cuevas, President
Harris County Deputies' Organization