Office of the Sheriff

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

BILL BROWN
Sheriff-Coroner

BRAD WELCH
Undersheriff

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July 28, 2026

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
07/29/2026
Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

Gwen Rigby
Foreperson, SBC Grand Jury
Santa Barbara County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
grigby@sbcourts.org

Re: Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report Entitled "*WHAT'S UP WITH THE EXCESSIVE OVERTIME? A Look at the Overtime Issues in the Sheriff's Office"*

Dear Foreperson Rigby,

Enclosed is the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office response to the 2025 – 2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report entitled "*WHAT'S UP WITH THE EXCESSIVE OVERTIME? A Look at the Overtime Issues in the Sheriff's Office"*

As requested in the report, the Sheriff's Office responds to Findings 1, 2, 3, 4 and Recommendations 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3, and 4.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at (805) 681-4290.

Sincerely,

BILL BROWN
Sheriff – Coroner

Enclosure: The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office response to the 2025 – 2026 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury Report entitled "*WHAT'S UP WITH THE EXCESSIVE OVERTIME? A Look at the Overtime Issues in the Sheriff's Office"*

STATIONS

Buellton
140 W. Highway 246
Buellton, CA 93427
Phone (805) 686-8150

Carpinteria
5775 Carpinteria Avenue
Carpinteria, CA 93013
Phone (805) 684-4561

Isla Vista
6504 Trigo Road
Isla Vista, CA 93117
Phone (805) 681-4179

Lompoc
3500 Harris Grade Road
Lompoc, CA 93436
Phone (805) 737-7737

New Cuyama
70 Newsome Street
New Cuyama, CA 93254
Phone (661) 766-2310

Santa Maria
812-A W. Foster Road
Santa Maria, CA 93455
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Solvang
1745 Mission Drive
Solvang, CA 93463
Phone (805) 686-5000

Sheriff - Coroner Office
66 S. San Antonio Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone (805) 681-4146

Main Jail
4436 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone (805) 681-4260

Northern Branch Jail
2301 Black Road
Santa Maria, CA 93455
(805) -554-3100

COURT SERVICES CIVIL OFFICES

Santa Barbara Division
1105 Santa Barbara Street
P O Box 690
Santa Barbara, CA 93102
Phone (805) 568-2900

Santa Maria Division
312 E. Cook Street, "O"
Santa Maria, CA 93456
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RESPONSE TO THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

GRAND JURY 2025-26 REPORT

WHAT'S UP WITH THE EXCESSIVE OVERTIME?

A Look at the Overtime Issues in the Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's Office shares the Grand Jury's commitment to fiscal accountability and agrees that overtime should be carefully monitored and reduced whenever operationally possible. We are disappointed, however, that this report does not acknowledge the two primary causes driving overtime usage within the Sheriff's Office: chronic understaffing caused by insufficient funded positions, and ongoing recruitment and retention challenges.

Unlike many County services, most of the Sheriff's Office responsibilities are statutorily mandated. The Sheriff's Office is legally required to provide custody operations, court security, civil process service, and emergency response 24/7/365 – regardless of staffing shortages or budget constraints. Furthermore, the County Board of Supervisors are obligated to adequately fund those essential public safety functions.

For almost two decades, however, the County has set the Sheriff's staffing levels and overtime budgets far below what is demonstrably required to meet its mandated duties. Multiple internal and external studies have reached the same conclusion: even if *every* funded position in the Sheriff's Office were fully staffed, current allocations would not provide enough labor hours to meet even minimal operational requirements without reliance on significant overtime. Absent sufficient labor hours – provided through a combination of funded positions and overtime – the County would face increased risks to staff, inmate, and public safety; greater exposure to litigation for noncompliance with statutory and court-ordered requirements, such as the Murray Settlement; and reductions in essential law enforcement and corrections services.

As a result, the Sheriff's Office has historically exceeded its overtime budget due to an insufficient number of funded positions, unrealistic overtime budgeting that does not reflect historical operational requirements, the absence of an adequate staffing relief factor, and unforeseen events such as emergencies and natural disasters. In prior years, staffing vacancies

helped offset a significant portion of overtime costs through salary savings. As recruitment and retention efforts have improved, and as Sheriff's staffing levels have been further reduced through budget cuts, those savings have declined. Ironically, success in filling positions has reduced the ability to absorb overtime expenses within existing budgets, exposing a long-standing mismatch between funding levels and operational demands.

The Sheriff's Office has not stood still in the face of these challenges. Mandatory overtime has been significantly reduced, technology solutions to reduce labor-hour demands are being actively pursued, and leadership has implemented additional scheduling controls, oversight measures, and operational efficiencies. In many cases, overtime reductions have been achieved not by eliminating waste, but by making difficult decisions about discretionary service levels and how limited resources are deployed.

The Grand Jury correctly identifies several areas where further improvements can be made. The Sheriff's Office supports many of those recommendations and remains committed to responsible fiscal management and continuous improvement.

The aforementioned improvements that have been made notwithstanding, long-term success requires a candid acknowledgment that the Sheriff's continuing need for substantial overtime is not the product of mismanagement. Rather, it is the entirely predictable consequence of staffing and budget levels that do not align with the Sheriff's Office's legally mandated public safety responsibilities and the corresponding labor hours those responsibilities require.

We invite the Grand Jury to more fully confront and report on this reality. Adequate staffing and realistic overtime budgeting for the Sheriff's Office should not fall secondary to shifting political priorities – they are critical and mandated investments in public safety, legal compliance, and the well-being of the communities we protect and serve.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1: *"The Memo of Understanding (MOU) between Santa Barbara County and the Deputy Sheriffs' Association contains provisions that compound the overtime issues within the Sheriff's Office."*

RESPONSE: The Sheriff agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 1a: *"The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors negotiate with the Deputy Sheriffs' Association to revise the Memorandum of Understanding to disallow the use of leave balances as time worked."*

RESPONSE: Will be implemented in accordance with the new County-DSA MOU and will become effective following approval by the Association and ratification by the Board of Supervisors and will remain in effect through July, 2028. For purposes of computing overtime, this MOU treats regularly scheduled hours worked, paid vacation, holiday leave, and military leave as hours worked. Paid sick leave and compensatory time used will not be treated as hours worked for overtime purposes prospectively.

Recommendation 1b. *"The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff set a maximum number of overtime hours per employee per pay period unless approved by a Lieutenant or higher level of management. To be completed by October 31, 2026."*

RESPONSE: Requires further analysis. The Sheriff understands and appreciates limiting overtime hours worked in the interest of employee wellness and efficiencies, specifically to prevent officer fatigue, burnout, and related safety issues. At the same time, exceptions to limits must be able to be made for critical emergencies, unplanned shift extensions, significant criminal investigations where time is of the essence, or mandated court appearances. We have determined that several larger Sheriff's Offices have imposed limits on overtime worked per pay period.

The new County-DSA MOU establishes an annual overtime cap in which employees shall not work more than 1,300 overtime hours during a fiscal year absent written approval from the Department Head or designee.

Finding 2: *"Staff and managerial training are provided to the Sheriff's Office by the County but, historically, management have not been accountable for evaluating and implementing that training."*

RESPONSE: Disagree. Although the county does offer some general management training and requires some specific training in areas such as workplace violence, sexual harassment, and cyber security, the county has not provided staff and managerial training specifically regarding timecard approval and overtime management. The county does offer guidance on how to prepare performance evaluations.

Recommendation 2a: *"The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff implement an improved Employee Performance Review system that holds staff and management accountable to manage overtime. To be completed by October 31, 2026."*

RESPONSE: Agree. Has been implemented. The current EPR process already provides the opportunity for executives and managers to hold their staff accountable for a variety of tasks, including the management of overtime and approval of electronic timecards. Sworn personnel are scored on 21 metrics related to their ability to manage and supervise and are then provided an overall score from 1 – Unsatisfactory to 5 – Exceptional. Metrics where overtime management could be considered include the following:

- Quality of Work: Part of a manager's and supervisor's duties include close management of overtime.
- Judgment: overtime management and supervision require good decision-making skills
- Analytical Ability: Ability to determine when overtime is justified, overused, or different time options exist.
- Performance with Minimum Supervision: In part, rates an employee's ability to proactively manage overtime without the need for executive interventions.
- Supervisor Assignment and Supervision of Staff: The ability to assign, move, and oversee the day-to-day operations of their people and know how overtime is being used.

- Resource Management: The ability to use their bureau/unit resources in a manner that prioritizes the reductions in overtime.

Professional Staff (Civilian Support Staff) EPRs are currently under revision in a new pilot program, and do not contain the exact same metrics, but overtime management could be considered in the following performance areas:

- Manages resources effectively, including but not limited to staff, budget, and time: The ability to use their bureau/unit resources in a manner that prioritizes the reductions in overtime.
- Monitors outcomes and adjusts as needed: The ability to assign, move, and oversee the day-to-day operations of their people and know how overtime is being used.
- Analyzes complex issues and develops solutions: Ability to determine when overtime is justified, overused, or different time options exist.
- Sets clear direction, expectations, and priorities; monitors progress and ensures accountability for outcomes: Part of a manager and supervisor's duties include close management of overtime.

On July 27, 2026, the Undersheriff issued Sheriff's Bulletin 26-05 informing all Sheriff's Office employees—both sworn and professional staff—that supervisors at every level are responsible for managing overtime and approving electronic timecards for their direct reports. Executives, managers, and second-line supervisors will evaluate their supervisory staff on these responsibilities during annual appraisals, using any appropriate metrics described above to assess effectiveness and efficiency in overtime management and timecard approval.

Recommendation 2b: "*The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff implement a quarterly review of management practices including timecard approvals and overtime shift approvals. To be completed by October 31, 2026.*"

RESPONSE: Has been implemented. The Sheriffs' Office established a bi-weekly review of timecard approvals for each Pay Period (PP), starting as a test case in January 2026 for PP02, then rolling out across the Sheriff's Office on PP03. As an initial baseline, 91 timecards needed approvals at 0900 the Tuesday after PP03 closed in February 2026. Since then, the number of

timecards needing approvals at 0900 the Tuesday after a PP closes has dropped to 45 at the end of March, 42 at the end of April, and 26 at the end of May. That is a 71.4% decrease – from 91 to 26 – in four months. It must also be noted that many of the timecards flagged as needing approvals had extenuating circumstances – such as employees unable to approve their timecards due to extended maternity or military leave (supervisors, however, were able to approve those timecards). The Sheriff's Office has also begun dedicating time at least once each quarter during weekly staff meetings for the Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to brief out overtime management and timecard approval status, trends, and other related data.

Finding 3: "*The current payroll system is ineffective for the Sheriff's needs today. It does not allow the Sheriffs' Office to effectively track, analyze, or report regular hours and overtime for a dynamic and mobile workforce.*"

RESPONSE: The Sheriff agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 3: "*The Grand Jury recommends that the County and the Sheriff work together to accelerate the build-out and installation of Workday (the new countywide payroll and human resources management system) for the Sheriff. To be completed by January 1, 2027.*"

RESPONSE: Requires further analysis and coordination with the County to determine if the County has the ability to accelerate the build-out and installation of Workday's payroll system for the Sheriff's Office before the close of the current calendar year. After Workday's payroll system is implemented, the Sheriff's Office will be able to assess the new system's capabilities to effectively track, analyze, or report hours and overtime. It must be noted that timelines for the implementation of Workday's payroll system are the County's responsibility and completely outside of Sheriff's Office control; the county's current projection is that Workday payroll system implementation will not be completed until June 2028. The Sheriff's Office is actively exploring alternative electronic timecard and automated scheduling systems—designed specifically for law enforcement and first responders—and has already received several product demonstrations. However, we expect significant technical challenges for these third-party systems in accessing the necessary data from both the current proprietary payroll platform and the future Workday system. Without that access, the Sheriff's Office cannot fully benefit from these potential solutions, effectively limiting their viability as interim or supplemental tools.

Finding 4: "*Increased staffing costs are exacerbated by the administration of two jail facilities.*"

RESPONSE: The Sheriff agrees with this finding.

Recommendation 4: "*The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff work together to create a decommissioning plan for the Main South County Jail with the goal of closing that facility as quickly as possible. To be completed by December 31, 2026.*"

RESPONSE: Will be implemented. The County, in collaboration with the Sheriff's Office, Board of Supervisors, General Services, County Executive Office, and other affected departments, is actively developing a formal decommissioning plan for the Main (South County) Jail. The plan will identify the actions, responsible departments, milestones, and timeline necessary to safely decommission and close the facility as soon as operationally feasible. The ability to close the Main Jail depends on completion of the Northern Branch Jail reconfiguration project, which must provide the capacity and operational capabilities needed to relocate custody and other operations. Because this project requires coordination among multiple County departments – including Community Resources & Public Services, Health and Human Services, General Government & Support Services, Policy & Executive Services, and the Sheriff's Office – the County's decommissioning plan should incorporate interdepartmental activities and establish a coordinated implementation schedule.

The County expects to complete the decommissioning plan by December 31, 2026, consistent with the Grand Jury's recommendation, with closure of Main Jail inmate housing areas (other than the Inmate Reception Center) occurring as soon as the required operational and construction milestones have been achieved.