



## OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT POLICE AUDITOR


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Judge LaDoris H. Cordell (Ret.)  
Independent Police Auditor

29 January 2015

To: The President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing

From: Judge LaDoris H. Cordell (Ret.)   
Independent Police Auditor for the City of San Jose, California

Re: Support for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement and the Recommendations of NACOLE

Our office is a member of NACOLE and supportive of its sensible and innovative work to promote civilian oversight of law enforcement. I am in full support of NACOLE's five recommendations to the President's Task Force, and especially want to emphasize the importance of its fifth recommendation---ensure that independent civilian oversight is a part of efforts to identify and resolve underlying systemic problems within law enforcement.

Since 2010, I have been the Independent Police Auditor (IPA) for the City of San Jose, California. Before that, I was a California State Court judge for 19 years. The responsibilities of the IPA office are three-fold: (1) to provide civilian oversight of police misconduct complaints from the public; (2) to conduct outreach throughout the City of San Jose (the 10<sup>th</sup> largest city in the U.S.), and (3) to recommend better police policies and practices to the San Jose Police Department. In 1996, the City Charter was amended by the electorate to establish the IPA office as a formal part of San Jose city government.

The police, no less than the rest of us, are mortals---composites of strength and weakness, insight and obtuseness. Therefore, it is not enough that the police be fair, they must be perceived to be fair by the public they serve, a perception that is undermined when the police are left to police themselves. The debate over who should oversee the police has existed since the beginning of American policing. From local politicians to police commissions to civilian review boards to civilian police auditors, just who is best suited to police the police has changed over the years. What is clear is that public's trust in our police officers cannot thrive without independent civilian oversight.

It is my view that every police department in this country should have some form of independent civilian oversight of investigations into allegations of police misconduct. In San Jose, although it is the Internal Affairs Unit that investigates complaints of officer misconduct, it is our office that oversees those investigations and the analyses of whether or not misconduct occurred. While there are ways in which the work of our office can be improved, it is the case that those who live

and work in San Jose understand that the police do not police themselves. And it is because of this oversight that the trust between the police and San Jose residents, especially those residents of color, has improved in San Jose.

I urge the President's Task Force to recommend that all federal policing grants be conditioned on the requirement that the recipients establish and maintain independent civilian oversight agencies.

Cc: Brian Buchner  
President, NACOLE