



Arizona State Senate *Office of the President*

April 6, 2025

Honorable Harmeet Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Dhillon,

Congratulations on your recent confirmation to serve in President Donald J. Trump's Administration as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. Your service comes at a pivotal time for our nation, as we look to reverse many of the harms perpetrated on Americans by the previous administration's assault of our values and laws. I have full confidence in your ability to work with President Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi to help restore Americans' faith and trust in our Department of Justice (DOJ).

During the final year of former President Joseph R. Biden's term, Attorney General Merrick Garland's DOJ announced that the Phoenix Police Department and the City of Phoenix "engage[d] in a pattern or practice of conduct that violates the U.S. Constitution and federal law." The DOJ's report contained a host of biased and inaccurate findings against the City's Police Department, putting Phoenix on a path for a destructive and costly consent decree that would discourage our brave men and women in blue from reducing crime and protecting innocent Phoenicians. It would also have a tremendous impact on the agency's ability to recruit and retain enough officers to service our communities. *To avoid this disastrous outcome for innocent and law-abiding men, women, and children of our community, I respectfully ask your office to rescind this report.*

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A comprehensive review of this report makes clear that the DOJ misstates facts and the law in making the case of wrongdoing against the Phoenix Police Department. The DOJ incorrectly applies facts to law and ignores federal court findings related to specific incidents. Additionally, the federal government did not disclose its “experts” or methodologies for comprising this report, nor were its remedial measures linked to constitutional duties or standards.

Many respected officials in Arizona law enforcement agencies and public positions have raised several valid objections to the DOJ’s report. Maricopa County Attorney Rachel Mitchell wrote, “Here’s what the DOJ report did not include: a full set of facts. Nor did it ask the right questions. ... But that’s not how the DOJ operates. Instead, they use bits and pieces of information to claim patterns or practices of misconduct with little or no supporting evidence.”

City of Phoenix Councilmember Ann O’Brien stated, “I have no intention of signing anything given to us by the Department of Justice without getting to read their findings first. That’s the thing: the DOJ gets agencies to sign an agreement in principle before ever releasing their findings, which essentially means that agency will negotiate a consent decree in good faith. Not Phoenix.”

Darrell Kriplean, President of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association, added, “The DOJ has a 30-year record of consent decrees. Not one can be touted as a success. Sure, some cities are forced to obtain equipment for their police departments, but, as a whole, they are unsuccessful. Consent decrees are successful in spiking violent crime and police department budgets and enriching the individuals chosen to serve as oversight monitors.”

A ranking member of the Phoenix Police Sergeant’s & Lieutenants Association (PPSLA) told my office that “the DOJ objected to our practice of providing attorney representation and of recording/transcribing interviews. Their resistance made sense once we reviewed their findings report and compared it to the record that we had compiled. It was stunning to see the disparity between the actual record and the DOJ’s characterization of the interviews.”

PPSLA produced three categories of errors in the DOJ’s report, which are as follows (and I have included documentation for your review):

1. Factual misrepresentations related to the circumstances of individual incidents.
2. Legal mischaracterizations regarding the governing standards as well as the adjudication of individual incidents.

3. Inaccurate quotations from interviews that PPSLA participated in.

Arizona has a history with these consent decrees from the federal government. In 2015, after years of investigating, DOJ's Civil Rights Division finalized a settlement agreement with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, leading to a federal court in Arizona enforcing the terms with the assistance of a monitor. Since that decision, it has been reported that the costs to bring the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office into compliance will have exceeded \$310 million by this summer – an astronomical amount of money that is shouldered by hardworking taxpayers.

It's not just Republicans who oppose these ominous arrangements with the federal government. Former Maricopa County Sheriff Paul Penzone, a Democrat, resigned from his position last year, in large part, due to frustration from the consent decree hanging over his office. He said, "I'll be damned if I do three terms under federal court oversight, for a debt I never incurred, and not be able to serve this community in the manner that I could if you took the other hand from being tied behind my back. Because the future without law enforcement doesn't look good."

Any reasonable person will agree that rogue police agencies or officers should be held accountable for breaking laws and abusing their authority in our communities. To its credit, the City of Phoenix and its Police Department realized the need to reform its policies and set out to enact those changes. In a letter from attorney Michael R. Bromwich to DOJ officials in January 2024, he wrote, "Over the last 16 months, under Interim Chief (IC) Michael G. Sullivan, those reforms have touched virtually every aspect of the operations implicated by the DOJ investigation. Lacking the opportunity to respond to the DOJ's report before it is made public, we have prepared a detailed report, [which] describes the various policies, programs, training, and other initiatives that have been developed and implemented in PPD under IC Sullivan, with the full support of the City, as well as those that pre-dated IC Sullivan's arrival. These changes demonstrate a powerful commitment to reform, a commitment that warrants a different approach from the DOJ than has been the case over the past dozen years."

However, the DOJ has consistently proven its inability to bring any meaningful reforms to local departments through these decrees, as demonstrated in Maricopa County and in dozens of other jurisdictions around the nation. The implementation of these consent decrees leads to an increase in crime and a dwindling of law enforcement ranks. Additionally, due to the exorbitant price tags attached to these arrangements with DOJ bureaucrats, businesses and residential areas suffer from diminished public safety and less involvement.

The issues with these consent decrees go further, though. As in the case with Maricopa County, the outside, appointed monitors and federal courts are not responsive to real-life community concerns in these local jurisdictions. The DOJ operates these consent decrees with a one-size-fits-all mindset, with no heed for the unique circumstances faced by the different localities. This federal overreach is not at all what our Founding Fathers envisioned when they drafted the Constitution and Bill of Rights, establishing a system where there were clear lines of demarcation between federal and state governments. Instead, local governments can revise reform efforts at any time, without needing approval from an appointed federal monitor or court. This reform is exactly what was taking place in Phoenix before the unveiling of the DOJ's report last summer.

In short, these consent decrees are nothing more than backhanded attempts to hijack police departments and bring them under the control of the federal government. The consent decrees are unconstitutional and exploited by overreaching presidential administrations.

Assistant Attorney General Dhillon, with your ascension to this office, you have an opportunity to stand with the people of Phoenix and put the future of this city and its Police Department on a better path. We appreciate your time and consideration of our request to rescind this report. If you would like to discuss this matter further, I will make myself available at any time of convenience to you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Petersen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and "P".

Warren Petersen
President of the Arizona State Senate