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Orange County Sheriff's Department Announces ACLU's Dismissal of Lawsuit with Prejudice

SANTA ANA, Calif. (March 25, 2025): The Orange County Sheriff's Department has resolved the lawsuit brought by People for the Ethical Operation of Prosecutors and Law Enforcement (P.E.O.P.L.E.), Bethany Webb, Theresa Smith, and Tina Jackson. This case, initiated in 2018, focused on the use of custodial informants in Orange County jails and alleged violations of the U.S. Constitution and state laws. The lawsuit has been dismissed with prejudice by the Plaintiffs, who acknowledged that their case had no impact on the Department's operations. This outcome underscores the Orange County Sheriff's Department's commitment to constitutional policing and proactive measures to protect the rights of all individuals.

Sheriff Don Barnes, unwavering in his confidence in the Department's position throughout the litigation, stated, "I was confident we would prevail in court. This lawsuit, which wasted millions of taxpayer dollars defending a case against the County that never had merit, has finally been dismissed. This dismissal reaffirms that our policies are aligned with constitutional standards and further validates the Department's dedication to lawful policing practices."

The Orange County Sheriff's Department has consistently worked to ensure compliance with constitutional mandates outside of any litigation and without any external oversight mandates. In January 2025, the U.S. Department of Justice (U.S. DOJ) concluded its investigation into the Orange County Sheriff's Department's use of custodial informants, recognizing substantial compliance with constitutional requirements. The U.S. DOJ made no changes to the Department's internal processes or procedures when it made its findings. P.E.O.P.L.E.'s settlement acknowledges the U.S. DOJ has found the Department's current policies and procedures regarding the use of custodial informants are in substantial compliance with the Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments.

"The Department has shown consistency in lawful practices through the closure of the U.S. DOJ investigation and now in the dismissal of this case," said Mary Izadi, the Orange County Sheriff's Department's Constitutional Policing Advisor. "We remain committed to serving the community while protecting constitutional rights through proactive policies."

The Plaintiffs, in their settlement agreement, acknowledged that neither the Orange County Sheriff's Department nor the U.S. DOJ considered or accepted their views or input regarding the Orange County Sheriff's Department's current policies and procedures regarding the use of informants inside the Orange County jails.

"It is unfortunate that it took Plaintiffs years to realize their lawsuit was baseless," said Sheriff Barnes. "The resolution of this case without any requirements, changes, or additional costs reaffirms the work of the men and women of the Orange County Sheriff's Department and their dedication to safeguarding the constitutional rights of those entrusted to our care."

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