



**Office of the Mayor
City of Los Angeles**

ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA

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Contact: Matt Szabo
(213) 978-0741

Remarks of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa regarding
LAFD hazing settlement

“Ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you all for coming today.

We’re here this afternoon to declare unequivocally:

The practice of hazing has NO PLACE in the City of Los Angeles!

We’ve all read the reports—many of us have seen the images—depicting alleged activities in the Los Angeles Fire Department that have placed the City in a position of potential legal liability.

Like most Angelenos, I find these images deeply disturbing and totally unacceptable.

Hazing is reckless, reprehensible, and juvenile.

Any conduct that demeans or that otherwise makes people feel unwelcome in the workplace will not be tolerated. Period.

As City employees, we need to remember that public service is an honor and a privilege.

I know that an overwhelming number of our employees feel that way.

They work hard.

They come to their jobs every day with a full respect for the opportunity they are being given.

Above all, they know that the taxpayers have an unqualified right to expect that our city's civil servants will conduct themselves at all times as complete professionals.

Today, I have issued an Executive Directive declaring a ZERO TOLERANCE policy against hazing in all City's departments.

It's time to end the practice once and for all.

It's time to break the cycle.

Where necessary, it is time to change the culture.

We are one City workforce, serving one community, and behavior that divides us has no place in the City of Los Angeles.

This Executive Directive will require notification of our zero tolerance policy of every City employee in every Department.

It provides for the immediate investigation and discipline in any alleged case of hazing.

It requires all City departments to report back on past hazing incidents and to recommend tougher guidelines for handling incidents in the future.

I am pleased to say that the Fire Commission will soon be considering a set of improved disciplinary guidelines following on a series of audits by Controller Laura Chick.

These tougher disciplinary guidelines will strengthen accountability standards in 144 different categories of misconduct.

Employees engaging in hazing or horseplay will be subject disciplinary action, including suspension and possible termination.

I want to commend the commission and the stakeholders who participated in fashioning these reforms through many months of hard work and many hours of tough deliberations. I look forward to the Commission approving these guidelines very soon.

And I want to say: We will be enacting similar standards in every City department.

Now, I want to address specifically the City Attorney's recommended settlement in the case of Tennie Pierce versus the City of Los Angeles.

Like every Angeleno, I am deeply troubled by the allegations raised here.

We cannot tolerate discrimination in any form.

However, new information has come to light since the City Attorney recommended settlement of the case.

I believe that this information merits a reexamination of the matter.

Given the magnitude of the recommended settlement, taxpayers have a right to demand a reconsideration with the full benefit of all the facts.

Today, I announced \$15 million in long-needed investments in South Los Angeles today, so when I say every dollar counts, I mean it.

We have a fundamental fiduciary responsibility to ensure the wise use of tax dollars.

Accordingly, I am returning the item with my veto and with a request that the City get back to work on the case.

My veto of this action will permit a reconsideration of settlement in light of all of the evidence surrounding the claims in the lawsuit

I want to stress, however, that the alleged behavior underlying this case must be eliminated in our City workforce.

As this case illustrates, hazing creates a serious risk of legal liability for the City, and it undermines professionalism we expect in the workplace.

That's why we're going to take a hard line—AND ADOPT A ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY—with respect to hazing in the City of Los Angeles.”