



NEWS FROM

CITY CONTROLLER LAURA N. CHICK

City Hall East, Room 300, 200 N. Main St., Los Angeles, CA 90012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHICK FINDS VAST IMPROVEMENT AT FIRE DEPARTMENT

Los Angeles – Over two years since she found incidents of harassment, hazing and discrimination at the Fire Department, City Controller Laura Chick reports that the situation has vastly improved.

“While there is still room for improvement, the Fire Department has come a long way in reforming and attempting to change its culture,” said Chick.

“Real change must come from the top down, and in the last year-and-a-half, Chief Douglas Barry has taken bold action to put the Department on a new track. Chief Barry has effectively strengthened communication by developing a formal vision for the Department and personally visiting nearly every fire station to directly deliver his expectations,” said Chick.

“It is our goal that the reforms we are implementing have an immediate as well as a long lasting impact. The Fire Department recognizes that though we have made good progress, there is still work to do. We are committed to following our implementation plan and its timelines and thank the Mayor’s office, Fire Commission and City Council for their support in our efforts,” said Barry

Chick’s audit found the Fire Department has implemented standard, consistent and fair disciplinary guidelines. The complaint and investigatory function has been restructured within a new division, the Professional Standards Division, which now lies outside of the Operations chain of command.

“Yet changing a culture will not happen overnight, and there are still key areas that must be addressed immediately. Disciplinary complaints continue to be investigated by Captains who are on rotational assignment and are permitted to work overtime in other Fire Department locations. This practice creates a revolving door and potential conflict of interest, as he or she may interact with other LAFD members who are the subjects of active investigations,” wrote Chick in a letter to the City’s elected officials.

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The Chick report found that fully staffing the Professional Standards Division will help strengthen the independence and consistency of the Department's investigative and disciplinary function. This progress may be threatened by the City's current fiscal crisis, which can impede filling these critical positions.

"Over a decade ago many reforms were initiated in the Fire Department and progress was made. Unfortunately we didn't follow through to see all the reforms to completion; then the same problems reoccurred. We stand at a critical juncture to see if we will move boldly forward to once again finish what we have started. We must give the Fire Department the support, attention and resources it needs to change its culture once and for all. Which is money more painfully spent...the upfront dollars to staff the Professional Standards Division or the back end millions of dollars to pay lawyers and lawsuit claims?," concluded Chick.

The Chick audit can be accessed at her web-site at www.lacity.org/ctr.

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