



NEWS FROM

CITY CONTROLLER LAURA CHICK

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

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CHICK CALLS FOR CITY TO END RAPE KIT BACKLOG 'ONCE AND FOR ALL'

Los Angeles -- Calling it, “a critically unacceptable situation,” City Controller Laura Chick has released an audit confirming nearly 7,000 untested rape kits sitting on freezer shelves in the Los Angeles Police Department’s crime lab.

“The audit confirms our worst fears. The bigger story here is what we will do now to solve this crisis.

We need a focused and funded plan to end the backlog within the next years. New York City did it when they had a much larger backlog and Los Angeles can and must do it as well,” said Chick.

A rape kit is the physical evidence, often including DNA, that is collected after a sexual assault. Timely testing of rape kits is essential in identifying and convicting perpetrators who are frequently repeat offenders. At least 217 of the untested rape kits have now exceeded the statute of limitations and are useless.

“Despite having been awarded nearly \$4 million in grant funds for the LAPD’s crime lab, this critically unacceptable situation is at an all time high and growing,” said Chick.

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Chick Audit

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“Why add to the suffering of rape victims by making them wait years to investigate and prosecute their cases – or letting a prosecution go forward without this evidence,” said Sarah Tofte, a US Program researcher at Human Rights Watch who is researching the rape-kit backlog in Los Angeles and around the country. “The department needs to use its own budget and any future grants to make sure the job gets done.”

The audit also reconfirms that the LAPD lost nearly half a million grant dollars due to the Department’s lax oversight of the monies.

“It is beyond disturbing that the thousands of victims who have undergone the invasive ordeal of these 4-6 hour tests have not even been notified that their evidence is still untested. One of the audit’s findings calls out a Penal Code provision that requires the LAPD to make this notification to victims; the LAPD does not do that now,” wrote Chick in a letter accompanying the audit to the Mayor, City Attorney and City Council.

“During the past 15 years I have worked with three different Mayors, all of whom have promised to increase the numbers of uniformed police officers in the LAPD. But what this audit so clearly shows is that a comprehensive public safety plan for the City of Los Angeles must include much more than just additional police officers. You can have all the police officers in the world out on the streets making arrests, and if you have a non-functioning crime lab that can’t analyze DNA evidence, the young girls and women of this City cannot and will not be safe,” said Chick who is a former Chair of the City Council’s Public Safety Committee.

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