



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

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January 26, 2009

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street, Suit 521
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Supervisors,

For the last year, several county employees and their representatives have come before the Civil Service Commission to express dissatisfaction concerns about the county's whistleblower program. The Commission formed an ad hoc committee in response to hear the employee's concerns.

As you know, the whistleblower program, managed by the Auditor's office, provides an opportunity for the community and employees to report misconduct or abuse within the county system. It assumes anonymity for the reporting party. The Auditor's Office receives the whistleblower complaints and typically forwards them to the impacted department for investigation and resolution.

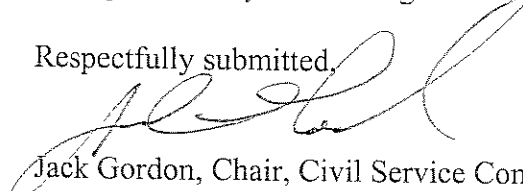
Employees feel that complaints forwarded directly to the impacted department make it easy for the department to identify the reporting party and they fear retaliation. They claim that the process creates a barrier that discourages employees from reporting misconduct.

Service Employees International Union reported their dissatisfaction about the whistleblower program to the Grand Jury. The 2007-2008 Grand Jury's report concurred with the union's concerns about anonymity. They recommended that reporting parties be told that complaints are forwarded to the appropriate department head for action and encouraged the Board to create an independent body for whistleblower complaints.

On September 23, 2008, your Board approved changes to the Whistleblower Hotline policy that clarify that reports within the Hotline parameters will be investigated either by a staff person in the Auditor-Controller's officer or will be forwarded to the appropriate Department Head for resolution.

The work of the Commission's ad hoc committee is complete. The full Commission now requests that your Board take the next step and revisit the Grand Jury's recommendation to establish a body independent of county government to serve as the first point of contact for whistleblower complaints. After this initial screening, the complaint may be forwarded to the appropriate entity for investigation and resolution.

Respectfully submitted,


Jack Gordon, Chair, Civil Service Commission

IX b.