



September 30, 2013

## **STRONG AND SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS**

### **Kevin Faulconer's Plan to Rebuild the San Diego Police Department**

Every San Diegan deserves to feel safe. But budget cuts over the last several years have left the City with fewer officers in our neighborhoods. The San Diego Police Department has about 1,800 officers -- that's fewer than it had more than a decade ago. The Police Department lost an average of 10 officers a month last year. Many officers left due to retirement or better pay and benefits offered by other agencies. Currently, there are approximately 135 police officer vacancies.

This trend can no longer continue. San Diego risks losing experienced police officers and qualified new applicants if it does not take action now.

To rebuild the Police Department and improve public safety, Kevin is proposing a three-point plan:

1. Streamline recruitment and hiring practices
2. Close the compensation gap
3. Invest in staffing and equipment

**San Diego risks losing experienced police officers and qualified new applicants if it does not take action now.**

#### **Background: A record of results**

Kevin has already taken action to begin rebuilding the Police Department.

**More take home pay for police officers.** Kevin led a movement this year to invest \$2 million toward boosting police officer take home pay — without increasing pension benefits — and ramp up police recruitment efforts. The first recruitment Expo funded with this investment is scheduled for Oct. 5.

**Speeding up police recruitment process.** During the required written test to become a police officer — the first step in the police recruit hiring process — there were often vacancies due to applicant no-shows. Kevin recently pushed to streamline the process, resulting in the creation of "Standby Policy" to notify prospective applicants if there is room in an upcoming exam. This new policy helps ensure there are fewer empty seats during testing, and applicants are processed as quickly as possible.

**Eliminating bureaucratic redundancies.** The City's Personnel Department had been conducting background checks on civilian applicants — a duplication of a review that was already completed during a more comprehensive background check required by the Police Department. This unnecessary step was eliminated after it was highlighted by Kevin at a recent City Council committee hearing.



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Kevin Faulconer's Three-Point Plan

Several local law enforcement agencies are hiring, and in order to retain officers the City of San Diego must provide competitive compensation as well as an effective and streamlined hiring process. In Fiscal Year 2013, the Police Department lost 51 of its prospective officers to other agencies, and many of them reported that the length of the hiring process contributed to their decision. In many cases it took more than three months for the City to respond to an applicant to even begin the process of becoming a police officer.

Kevin's three-point plan cuts red tape, makes San Diego competitive again, improves public safety and strengthens our neighborhoods

**1. Streamline Recruitment and Hiring Practices**

The Police Department relies on an efficient and effective hiring process to operate at capacity and quickly fill budgeted positions. During these difficult times when budgetary resources are scarce, it is a stunning failure that budgeted sworn officer and civilian positions — some funded by state and federal grants — went vacant because of the City's lengthy and burdensome hiring process. The City must restructure its hiring practices to ensure the Police Department attracts and retains the best personnel.

Kevin recently brought to light the immense challenges the Police Department faces when trying to hire qualified applicants for both sworn and civilian positions. It was revealed at a February 2013 Budget Committee hearing that it took more than six months to fill four critical civilian positions. Kevin has directed the City's Personnel Department to closely work with the Police Department to improve the process and develop a methodology on how best to streamline hiring practices. Several changes have been implemented that reduce applicant processing time, but more must be done.

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As Mayor, Kevin will:

**Assign dedicated City personnel liaison to the Police Department.** In the past, the City's Personnel Department assigned representatives to the Police Department to address critical staffing needs. Kevin supports reinstating this program to expedite the hiring process for both sworn officers and civilian personnel.

**Hire hourly background investigators and two full-time grant writers.** During the last several years, the unit responsible for recruitment and hiring has been significantly reduced. In order to streamline the background check/hiring process, Kevin supports adding part-time, hourly provisional employees to assist with mandatory background checks for police applicants. These provisional police employees — retired staffers who return to work in a limited capacity for a limited amount of time and cannot collect additional pension benefits — would help decrease turnaround time for mandatory background checks. State and federal funds might pay for two grant writers, who would oversee all grants written by the department and work with Washington and Sacramento officials to identify funding opportunities for the Police Department. These additional resources will help further expedite the hiring process and discourage qualified applicants from accepting competing employment offers.

**Create measurable benchmarks.** Basic benchmarks, such as the average length of time it takes the City to respond to a Police Department applicant and schedule the required exam, need to be improved. The City's initial response to applicants should take no more than two to three weeks. The Personnel Department should be setting appropriate benchmarks and striving to meet these goals to ensure the Police Department is fully staffed. Kevin will continue to work with the Police Department to ensure new processes are implemented and continue to be evaluated to ensure they are effective for hiring the best qualified candidates.

## 2. Close the Compensation Gap

The Police Department's current compensation package is not competitive with other local agencies. The City must increase compensation for existing police officers and new recruits in order to attract and retain the most qualified individuals committed to San Diego and growing within the department.



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As Mayor, Kevin will:

#### **Provide a competitive compensation package.**

According to a recent study commissioned by the Association of Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, compensation for San Diego Police Department officers ranked 68th out of the 75 agencies surveyed. Additionally, a recent Police Officer's Association report showed San Diego officers are compensated on average 20 percent less than officers across the region.

In addition to increasing compensation for experienced officers, Kevin will implement recruitment strategies utilized at other law enforcement agencies. Some neighboring departments for example, including the County Sheriff's Department, offer signing bonuses to attract officers. Kevin will work with the Police Department to develop new incentives to attract and retain officers. A lot of time and taxpayer money is invested in hiring and training a San Diego police officer, so it is imperative the City create policies that ensure it is protecting its investment and building a strong Police Department. There is nothing more valuable to the department than its personnel, both sworn and civilian.

#### **Study ways to reduce health care costs to reduce officers' out-of-pocket expenses.**

Health care costs have soared in recent years and additional work needs to be done to ensure officers have the necessary resources to provide for their families. The Police Department has shown a willingness to find innovative and collaborative financial solutions. Kevin will continue to work with the department and listen to ideas to reduce out-of-pocket expenses.

#### **Provide support programs for Police Department personnel and their families.**

The work done by our officers and civilian police staff, especially during non-traditional business hours, puts a lot of stress on them and their families. The City and Police Department should be doing all they can to provide support to our officers to relieve any personal stress, thus allowing Police Department employees to focus on their duties. Kevin will work with the department to develop programs, such as child care services, for officers and their families.

**In addition to increasing compensation for experienced officers, Kevin will develop new incentives to attract and retain officers.**



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**Allocate funding to host and attend recruiting events.** The recruitment and retention program recently passed by the City Council called for the allocation of \$35,000 for recruitment purposes. The City could invest even more in hosting and attending recruitment events to connect with prospective applicants. The City's hiring process can be intimidating and difficult to navigate. Recruitment events can be an effective method to connect and inform applicants so they better understand the hiring process.

**Explore strategies to reduce costs to the Long-Term Disability Program.** Currently the City self-insures its long-term disability program. There is an opportunity to identify cost savings by having an outside insurance agency administer this program. Kevin is interesting in exploring this option. Potential savings could be applied to non-pensionable compensation.

### 3. Invest in Staffing and Equipment

The recent economic crisis hit San Diego hard. To meet the budgetary challenges, the Police Department was forced to forgo critical investments in staffing and equipment. The City can no longer wait to invest in these needs.

As Mayor, Kevin will:

**Support the staffing and equipment needs outlined in the department's 5-year plan.** While the 5-year plan was presented at the City Council's committee level in July 2012, there has not been leadership to move it forward with funding of the ideas presented by the department related to several key recommendations. Kevin will move forward with implementation of the plan and work with the department to develop milestones for implementation and accountability measures.

**Prioritize the modernization or replacement of vital equipment and police facilities.** The City needs to do a better job investing and tracking the Police Department's equipment needs. Kevin understands that police officers need to feel confident about the equipment they use. There is no reason officers should feel they are entering a life or death situation with inferior equipment.



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Kevin is committed to ensuring the City finds the additional funding necessary to replace the Police Department's aging and inadequate dispatch system as soon as possible. The current equipment is outdated and is in dire need of replacement. Officers' safety and emergency response times are tied to the effectiveness of the department's dispatch system. For Fiscal Year 2014, the City Council voted to release \$3 million in one-time funding from \$6.9 million set aside to replace the aging Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. This action left a balance of \$3.9 million for upfront CAD system costs or payments for lease-purchase financing. However, the City still needs to identify an additional \$3 million over the next several years to ensure the upgrade is fully funded. As mayor, Kevin will prioritize funding for this essential system.

Additionally, the City has done a poor job of maintaining police facilities. Work environments are a significant component of job satisfaction. The City currently is failing to properly maintain many of the buildings where police officers work. Kevin is committed to investing in facilities to demonstrate the City's commitment to its officers.

### Conclusion

Kevin envisions a city where every San Diego family, regardless of where they live, can safely walk our streets without fear. San Diegans deserve to feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods.

Kevin believes the most direct way to make a positive impact in our communities is to provide adequate police staffing. The Police Department is committed to providing the best services possible — it just needs the resources to do it.

As mayor, rebuilding the San Diego Police Department will be one of Kevin's top priorities. His budget proposals will reflect the priorities in his plan.

Kevin has succeeded building consensus with his council colleagues on a variety of budget-related issues, so he is confident he will win their support to rebuild the department. Investments in our Police Department and public safety are investments in our neighborhoods.

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