

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Joint Statement from Sheriff Bill Gore and San Diego Police Chief Shelley Zimmerman**

In yesterday's *Union Tribune* article titled, "ACLU: Asset Seizure Hits Minorities Hard", it is important to point out that **none** of the alleged cases of abuse in the report involve a law enforcement agency from San Diego County. Additionally, in the table, "California Counties with Highest Per Capita Seizure Rates, 2014", - again, San Diego County is not listed.

The ACLU's and *Union Tribune's* allusions to forfeiture occurring more frequently in "communities of color" is an attempt to depict law enforcement's efforts, and the accompanying asset forfeitures, as racially biased. Rather, they are a comment on the changing demographics of California. According to the *Los Angeles Times* of July 8, 2015, "Latinos Now Outnumber Whites in California." In fact, the cities of San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco are majority minority in makeup. Since a majority of the drug crimes we investigate involve large cities, and large cities have a higher population and more law enforcement officers, it is not surprising that the vast majority of seizure efforts take place in these locales.

The ACLU and paper refer to "nearly half" of seizures involving people with Latino surnames. Given the facts that Latinos are the largest demographic group in the state, we have a close proximity to the Country of Mexico and a large percent of the illicit drugs in this state were smuggled over the Southwest border by Mexican drug cartels, this is not a surprising or controversial statistic. It is an attempt to create a belief that law enforcement is unfairly targeting those of Latino ancestry.

It is well known, that crime is higher in low-income communities – as a result, a majority of our enforcement efforts are concentrated in those areas to limit the victimization of the many law-abiding citizens who are forced to live there. Therefore it is not surprising that seizures are more prevalent in those areas, because drug activity is more prevalent there. One's presence in these communities does not equate to being "at risk" of civil forfeiture proceedings; engaging in criminal behavior does.

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