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2006-2008**

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17 April 2007

The Honorable Gloria Romero
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senate Romero:

I am pleased to inform you of our support for your SB1019 which will overturn the California Supreme Court decision in *Copley Press v. Superior Court* (2006) 39 Cal. 4th 1272. This decision has effectively shut down virtually every forum in which the public previously had access to the police discipline process. The resulting secrecy around police complaints will undermine police community relations and reduce accountability of the police to the communities they serve.


The importance of transparency and problem with secrecy is best illustrated by the controversy over the shooting of 13 year old Devin Brown by an officer with the Los Angeles Police department. There, the Police Commission found the shooting out of policy, but the Board of Rights for the Police Department – previously open to the public but now closed due to *Copley Press* – found the police action within policy. The secrecy around the proceeding resulted in community protest. Police chief Williams Bratton wanted to have a public process and release information, but was prohibited from doing so as a result of *Copley Press*.

The *Copley Press* decision has created unchecked secrecy in the peace officer discipline process. Absent legislative action there is virtually no opportunity for the public to access any information associated with confirmed serious misconduct of peace officers.

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Senator Gloria Romero

Ultimately, this debate is about whether or not the public should have a right to know about how their government works and functions. Secrecy around citizen complaints about police misconduct will only result in greater mistrust of the police, poor police-community relations, and ultimately less responsive and accountable police agencies. SB 1019 presents a step in the right direction towards addressing the problems caused by *Copley Press*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald E. Hampton", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ronald E. Hampton
Executive Director