

SB 1286 (Leno)

Enhance Community Oversight on Police Misconduct and Serious Uses of Force



When a police officer shoots a community member or is proven to violate someone's rights, the community deserves to know what happened. More importantly, we deserve to know how the department responded — whether police standards for use of force and officer misconduct match the communities' values and whether the system to hold officers accountable to those standards is working.

But California law keeps all investigations and discipline of police officers secret, even for deadly shootings or when an officer's own department finds they violated someone's rights. On information about police, California is one of the most secretive states in the nation. More than twenty-five states have greater public access to police records. Ten states make records available whether or not the department finds misconduct occurred. In California, complaints against other types of government employees aren't kept confidential if the complaint is well-founded or there's a strong public interest in disclosure.

Senate Bill 1286, introduced by Sen. Mark Leno, will help make police transparent and accountable to the communities they serve. The legislation will make available critical information on how the police departments handle the most serious use of force incidents and confirmed cases of misconduct.

Keeping records of police misconduct secret hurts public trust in law enforcement, particularly within communities that suffer the most from police harassment and brutality. A recent Pew Research Center poll found that only 30% of Americans, and just 10% of African Americans, believe law enforcement agencies are doing a good or excellent job of holding officers accountable for misconduct. Separate polling data shows that nearly 80% of Californians believe the public should have access to the findings of police misconduct.



We've seen far too many people killed at the hands of law enforcement to allow police agencies to keep judging those killings in secret. **Police have the power to take a life based on a split-second decision. The public deserves information about how that power has been used and abused.** SB 1286 is long overdue.

For more information about SB 1286, please contact:

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

SB 1286 will:

1. Allow public access to investigations, findings and discipline information on serious uses of force by police.
2. Allow public access to information on police misconduct.
3. Affirm that you have a right to be able to track your misconduct complaints and see what the police department is doing about it.
4. Give power back to civilian oversight bodies to effectively monitor police.