

This month I thought it would be appropriate to go over some housekeeping rules. As most of us are well aware, our job as police officers has gotten increasingly harder. We have the ACLU, publicly elected and appointed officials, civic leaders, the mainstream media and anti-public safety groups like BLM doing everything in their power to undermine the solid work that you are doing to keep the communities we serve safe. Then there is always the battle with our command staff that continues the time-honored Department tradition of finding simple, everyday mistakes as punishable deeds. It is harder and harder to succeed in your mission to keep our city safe without becoming a victim of the internal dragnet.

One of my biggest, if not the sole biggest disappointment as your League Director has not been the occasional lack of honesty and good faith when dealing with some in our command staff, because I expected that to be the case with some. To my chagrin, it has unfortunately been some of our own members who, for one reason or another, have decided to be good foot soldiers for management. The way I see it is, if you're no longer part of the daily grind of boots-on-the-ground police work and putting your life on the line, you should do everything in your ability to make sure that we are not failing those who are. If you are no longer experiencing the dangers and stress of police work, it is your moral obligation to back those who are.

If you are asked or ordered to do something that is unethical, immoral, unlawful or against the Department policy by a member of the command staff or some overzealous member who is close to command staff rank and willing to do anything to make an impression on his or her bosses by "putting screws" to one of our members, please take time to evaluate what you have been asked to do and what the consequences of this could be to you, your career, reputation or even worse, your peers or the person who may be the object of the conversation or agenda. Do not allow yourself to be put into a compromising situation where it will be hard for you to back out of. If something seems unfair, witch-huntish, just plain wrong or illegal, please assess what your options are to remove your involvement from the situation in a way that would not compromise your career. While we do not expect you to be familiar with law the same way an attorney would, the plain "smell test" will do: If you smell a rat, it probably is just that. If you are "asked" (always read as "ordered," as everything is carried out in the form of orders in a quasi-military organization) to do something that smells like a rat, it probably is just that.

The League is taking a close look at cases of abuse by the top command, both sworn and civilian, and will be assessing each case how to best handle it. If you are ordered to be part of

something that is clearly illegal (illegal detention, entrapment, eavesdropping, break-in), anything that may be criminal, circumvents due process and is not done in good faith, and you know it is wrong, please contact us at the League and allow our attorneys to make an assessment how to best deal with the issue at hand. They will advise you on how to best handle the situation. Know that whistleblower laws were designed to give protection and a voice to those who were put in such bad and compromising predicaments by those who abuse their authority and power and the public's trust.

Even we as officers are entitled to our constitutional protections. Waive none of them and demand representation.

Could you find yourself in that position? The answer is "yes," as we have many examples from the past. Please do yourself a favor and get into the damage-control mode before you may become the conveniently disposable fall-guy for the command staff. We understand what a difficult position you could be in. If you keep acquiescing, it will be that much harder to help you, the deeper your involvement becomes, and the circumstances you are in. I also understand being worried about the threat of losing your assignment, blackballing and having an uncertain promotional future that may come with refusing to do someone else's dirty work. Just remember that we chose to become cops because we believe in doing the right thing and because we inherently don't like bullies or those who take advantage of others. We all have to leave this job one day and look back on how we did it, and if we chose to stay true to the values we had when we took the oath to serve and to protect. I want to be able to look at myself in the mirror when I retire and know that I remained true to those values to the last day.

On a brighter note, it is a new year, and we will be facing many challenges in our noble profession. Some challenges are known that we can prepare for, but others so often are outside our reach and yet to arrive, so worrying about the unknown really does no good. Remember that despite all of the unprecedented negative coverage of law enforcement in the past few years, the public has steadfastly stayed by our side. All major polls have shown that. Maybe not in ways that we would like to see, but most people sympathize with the difficult nature of our job and realize that we do not waiver under pressure and our resolve does not wane due to rabble-rousing anarchists, self-serving politicians and negative, often purposely misleading media coverage for the sake of ratings. We are always there for them, through thick and thin.

Keep taking care of each other. Support each other and other law enforcement agencies and their members. As the blue line seems to have grown thinner, it is more important today, than ever to close the ranks, hold the line and to be there for each other.

As always, take care and stay safe! If you have any questions, feel free to email me at **TJTarjamo@lappl.org** or contact me at (213) 798-2286.