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Contact:

media@porac.org
(314) 574-1875

New PORAC Research Brief Demonstrates Need for Major Reform of Federal Police Consent Decrees

Report Finds Decades of Oversight Focused on Compliance Over Results, Costing Cities Hundreds of Millions While Failing to Improve Public Safety

Sacramento, CA — Today, the Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC) released a new research brief, [Evaluating Police Consent Decrees: From Compliance to Results](#), examining decades of federal police consent decrees and raising serious concerns about whether the current system consistently delivers meaningful improvements in constitutional policing, public safety, or community trust.

“Consent decrees were originally intended to serve as a limited federal oversight tool, used sparingly and in extreme cases to address systemic constitutional violations and restore public confidence,” **said Brian R. Marvel, President of the Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC)**. “But in practice, that intent does not match reality. What was meant to be targeted and temporary has too often become prolonged, open-ended control that measures success by compliance metrics instead of real improvements in public safety and accountability.”

PORAC’s report finds that the current consent decree model measures “success” by execution of its terms, not by actual outcomes or results.

The brief outlines several core structural failures:

- Jurisdictions under consent decrees often spend between **\$3 million and \$10 million annually** on monitoring, reporting, and compliance mandates. In Chicago alone, nearly **\$700 million** was spent in the first six years of its consent decree — resources that could otherwise support staffing, training, and community safety initiatives.
- In multiple jurisdictions, violent crime rates rose sharply after consent decrees took effect. In Albuquerque, **violent crime increased 34.4%** in the year the decree was implemented (2014), while **violent crime clearance rates declined 22%**.
- Broad, department-wide oversight imposed in response to isolated incidents can erode morale, accelerate attrition, and deepen recruitment challenges. The New Orleans Police Department lost 26.6% of its officers during a four-year window of its consent decree, **tripling response times from 51 minutes to 146 minutes** during that period.
- There has been **no comprehensive evaluation or evidence** demonstrating that satisfying consent decree requirements consistently produces safer communities or more equitable policing.
- Many recent consent decrees have lasted more than a decade, with court-appointed monitors earning up to **\$2 million per year**, operating with the ability to shift compliance benchmarks to extend the life of the consent decree without public input or transparency.

While PORAC's report identifies serious structural flaws in the current consent decree model, it does not reject accountability — it calls for reform. Consent decrees must be targeted, transparent, outcome-driven, and limited to truly extreme cases where local governments are unwilling or unable to correct systemic problems independently. Oversight should protect civil rights, deliver measurable public safety improvements, and restore local control without unnecessary delay.

To achieve that, PORAC supports the following reforms:

- Requiring the Attorney General to complete investigations within one year of initiation, when agencies provide full access to relevant records and personnel.
- Requiring the DOJ to demonstrate a proven “pattern or practice” of unconstitutional policing based on clear facts and evidence.
- Limiting consent decrees to five years unless ongoing violations are proven in court.
- Establishing objective standards and stronger accountability measures for monitor selection, performance, and transparency — including public reporting on compliance progress, crime trends, staffing levels, and monitor compensation.

At present, the U.S. Department of Justice records show there are 14 active consent decrees in place with law enforcement agencies – those cities deserve a clear path forward.

PORAC emphasizes that reforming the consent decree process is not about lowering standards for policing. It is about building a system that delivers meaningful reform, protects civil rights, strengthens public safety, and restores local authority without unnecessary delay.

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About the Peace Officers Research Association of California:

The Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC) was incorporated in 1953 as a professional federation of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. PORAC represents over 87,000 public safety members and over 960 associations, making it the largest law enforcement organization in California and the largest statewide association in the nation.