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June 6, 2013

VIA U.S. MAIL

Rick Gauthier, Chair
Law Enforcement Advisory Board
Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council
317 Academy Road
Pittsford, VT 05763

Re: Use of Tasers by Vermont Law Enforcement Agencies

Dear Rick:

I am writing to recommend that the Law Enforcement Advisory Board conduct a formal review of law enforcement policies and practices regarding the use of Tasers or other electronic control devices (ECDs) by Vermont law enforcement agencies and to consider development of a statewide policy on ECD use. This review is consistent with the statutory role of the Board to “undertake an on-going formal review process of law enforcement policies and practices with a goal of developing a comprehensive approach to providing the best services to Vermonters, given monies available.” 24 V.S.A. § 1939. The Board’s review and resulting recommendations with respect to a statewide policy will be critically important to the Legislature during the upcoming session when various committees are expected to consider whether a statewide policy and other guidelines should be required through legislation.

In 2008 this Office released a report on the use of Tasers in Vermont and since that time we have reviewed a number of incidents that involved Taser deployments. We have also reviewed studies conducted by the Maryland Attorney General and various educational institutions and interest groups. Finally, and most recently, my Office hosted a public forum on the use of Tasers in Vermont. This public forum included a panel consisting of State Senator Alice Nitka, State Representative Bill Lippert, Vermont ACLU Executive Director Allen Gilbert, Ed Paquin from Disability Rights Vermont, and myself. This forum also included several presentations as well as an opportunity for oral and written public comment.

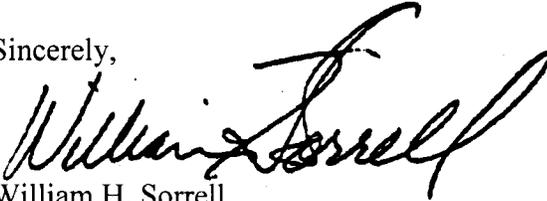
This most recent forum resulted in the panel concluding that both the public and law enforcement would greatly benefit from a uniform, statewide policy on electronic control devices. Should the Board concur and choose to develop such a policy the focus points should

include (1) the standard for deployment (2) a minimum training standard and (3) a reporting and accountability provision.

I plan to attend the next Board meeting to discuss this request in more detail. I will also be asking the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council to consider conducting a comprehensive and formal review of the training provided to Vermont law enforcement officers regarding ECDs as well as of the training provided to officers regarding interactions with persons in crisis or with cognitive disabilities or impairments.

In advance, thank you for your consideration of this very important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Sorrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and "S".

William H. Sorrell
Vermont Attorney General

cc: Senator Alice Nitka
Representative Bill Lippert
Allen Gilbert, ACLU
Ed Paquin, Disability Rights Vermont
Commissioner Keith Flynn, Department of Public Safety
Colonel Tom L'Esperance, Vermont State Police
Chief Christopher Brickell, Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police
Sheriff Keith Clark, Vermont Sheriffs' Association