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June 6, 2013

VIA U.S. MAIL

Rick Gauthier, Executive Director
Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council
317 Academy Road - Main Building
Pittsford, VT 05763

Sheriff Steve Benard, Chair
Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council
PO Box 303
Rutland, VT 05702-0303

Re: Training for Vermont Law Enforcement Officers

Dear Rick and Steve:

I am writing to request that the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council (VCJTC) consider conducting a comprehensive and formal review of the training provided to Vermont law enforcement officers regarding Tasers or other electronic control devices (ECDs). Additionally, I am requesting that the VCJTC consider a similarly comprehensive review of the training provided to officers regarding interactions with persons in crisis or with cognitive disabilities or impairments. Such a review could provide substantial assistance to the Legislature during the upcoming session when various committees will be considering bills regarding the use of ECDs by Vermont law enforcement agencies.

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.

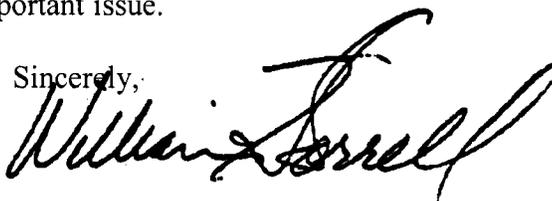
After conducting this work, especially reviewing the public comments received in response to the forum, I, along with other panel members, have concluded that both the public and law enforcement would greatly benefit from a uniform, statewide policy on electronic control devices. To that end I have asked the Law Enforcement Advisory Board to consider this issue.

The panel also concluded that ECD training for law enforcement officers should be uniform and include a standard for deployment and specific training on interacting with persons with cognitive disabilities or impairments. The panel learned that law enforcement officers have received varied levels of training in these areas.

The statutory purpose and mission of the VCJTC is to provide uniform standards of training and the promotion of law enforcement excellence and best practices. Therefore, the VCJTC is the appropriate entity to conduct this review.

My Office will assist in whatever capacity necessary to carry out this review of training. Thank you for 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