



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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**Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson and Police Chief Larry Gonzalez Meet Gov. Newsom to Discuss Ways to Reduce Organized Theft**

*Wednesday meeting included mayors and police chiefs from 13 of California's largest cities*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson and Police Chief Larry Gonzalez joined fellow mayors and chiefs of police from thirteen of California's largest cities in Long Beach today (7/21) for a roundtable discussion and press conference regarding state action to address crime and reduce organized theft in communities across California.

“Police departments from across the state have first-hand knowledge of the increases in crime and mental health needs in our respective communities,” Chief Gonzalez said. “Directly sharing information we have on these topics with the Governor and other state leaders is critical to finding comprehensive solutions.”

During the press conference, Gov. Newsom signed into law AB 331, which reauthorizes and extends the California Highway Patrol's Organized Retail Crime Taskforce until January 1, 2026. Since its 2019 inception, the Organized Retail Crime Taskforce has launched close to 700 investigations which led to 252 arrests and recovered tens of millions of dollars in property.

AB 331 deploys three taskforces around the Greater Los Angeles area -- one is dedicated specifically to the Inland region -- to identify specific communities with heightened instances of organized crime. The CHP then directs resources to target the perpetrators and maintain focus on the identified hotspots.

This legislation also establishes a tip hotline for residents in affected communities to provide valuable information to the CHP and assist in bringing perpetrators to justice.

Mayor Lock Dawson stated that public safety is a priority, and legislation such as AB 331 to enforce organized retail theft laws directly benefits residents of Riverside. She utilized her time during the press conference to advocate for addressing underlying causes of crime and mental health.

“In Riverside we share this sense of urgency when it comes to addressing mental and behavioral health shortfalls and how these health needs can be an underlying cause to criminal activity -- especially when mental healthcare services are not available,” Mayor Lock Dawson said.

Mayor Lock Dawson cited her nearly 10 years of service on the State Board of Behavioral Sciences during both the Schwarzenegger and Brown administrations and commended the state investment of \$3 billion to focus on behavioral health housing initiatives that will create tens of thousands of beds for those with serious mental illness.

The focus of the roundtable discussion between the Governor, mayors and chiefs of police was on crime trends in each of the cities and to review data on California’s crime rates and criminal activity in comparison to other states. The roundtable discussion also included the sharing of best practices from each of the respective police departments.

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