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District Attorney Removes All Civil Gang Injunctions Across San Diego County

Negative Consequences to Individuals Outweigh Lightly Enforced Injunctions

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan announced today that her office has filed petitions in San Diego Superior Court to lift all 20 civil gang injunctions in place in San Diego County, effectively removing the names of all 349 individuals from the injunction lists.

A Superior Court judge in downtown San Diego has signed orders dissolving four injunctions. One petition has been filed in South Bay and is awaiting judicial approval. In Vista, a judge has signed orders dissolving three injunctions. Twelve more are awaiting a judge's signature.

Two injunctions were dissolved in San Diego after petitions were filed by the San Diego City Attorney. The District Attorney will send letters informing people their name had been purged from the lists.

“In listening to the communities we serve, I heard concern for the violence and harm that criminal organized gangs cause, but also that families are looking for more opportunities for healthy reentry for those who have turned their lives around,” DA Stephan said. “In our county, civil gang injunctions were put in place 10 to 20 years ago and for the most part had become stale, and in many cases, continue to cause hardships for people who have moved on and are trying to get a job or connect with relatives. We’ve worked closely with our law enforcement partners to evaluate the injunctions and determined they are not effective in protecting the public from a primarily younger group of individuals who are committing gang-related crimes in our communities.”

The Police Chiefs and Sheriff from every city and region of the County that had one or more civil gang injunctions in place worked with the DA’s Office on evaluating the current impact of collateral consequences in comparison with public safety benefits and supported this action while remaining committed to fighting violence: Sheriff Bill Gore, San Diego Police Chief Dave Nisleit, Oceanside Police Chief Fred Armijo, National City Police Chief Jose Tellez and Escondido Police Chief Ed Varso.

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The civil gang injunctions were filed several years ago by previous DA administrations in various cities across the county, often in response to communities seeing a spike in gang-related violence. The injunctions are court orders restricting the most active and dangerous gang members from congregating with other known gang members, fighting, carrying weapons, and intimidation. However, no gang injunctions have been filed by the District Attorney's Office in the past eight years and the oldest existing injunction dates back to 1997.

The DA's removal of gang injunctions, in cooperation with the San Diego City Attorney Mara Elliott's Office, is consistent with the Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention's recommendations and aligns with San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria's recently released proposed police reform agenda.

"Gang injunctions are outdated, and do not serve their alleged purpose of protecting public safety. This is why I advocated to eliminate them as part of my police reform package," Mayor Todd Gloria said. "I'm grateful for the work of the District Attorney and City Attorney to finally remove all civil gang injunctions. It is the right thing to do and gives hundreds of San Diegans an opportunity to live without the fear a stale accusation could hurt their chances for good paying jobs, education and housing."

Two injunctions were dissolved in the City of San Diego on April 9.

"In 2019, my Office began working with the San Diego Police Department to remove from the City's civil gang injunctions the names of individuals who no longer posed a public safety threat," San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. "I commend the District Attorney and Mayor for their commitment to dissolving these injunctions completely, and I'm proud to be a part of this effort."

In March 2019, 332 people were removed from civil gang injunction lists following a careful review by the District Attorney's Office, which worked to confirm individuals' lack of recent criminal and gang activity. DA Stephan initiated the ongoing review, recognizing the dated nature of most of the injunctions and the potential problems that being on the list pose to those who are no longer affiliated with a gang or engaging in criminal activity.

In March 2020, another 33 people were removed from 11 injunctions and in December 2020, under revised criteria for removal 77 more names came off 19 injunctions. Nine individuals successfully petitioned for relief on their own.

Working with police departments across the County and the San Diego City Attorney's Office, the DA determined that shutting down the gang injunctions completely did not pose a serious threat to public safety and took legal action to remove them.

When a civil gang injunction is issued against an individual, it remains in effect for a lifetime unless that person applies for removal and meets certain criteria. However, most people don't know relief maybe available to them or how to go about requesting their name be removed.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.

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