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Fact checking the Deputy Sheriff's Association of Bexar County

This morning the Deputy Sheriff's Association of Bexar County stood on the steps of the Bexar County Courthouse and issued misinformation about what is in the proposed budget for the next fiscal year. Here are the union's representations followed by the facts.

DSABC: Every one of the deputies on the chopping block is qualified and trained to supplement patrol.

Fact: The proposed deletions are not patrol officers or any officers that have a direct impact on public safety. The fact is the proposed budget does delete any patrol, traffic safety, criminal warrants, criminal intelligence or investigations positions. A majority of the proposed deletions are civil warrant process servers, their jobs also are performed by the four constables offices and private process servers used by attorneys. One of the proposed deletions is an "off-duty employment officer," a non-essential, taxpayer-funded position that provides the DSABC members with coordination of part-time, after-hours, non-County jobs. The union could, however, use some of its collected membership dues to fund this position.

DSABC: Reducing the number of bailiffs and privatizing door security at the Courthouse and Justice Center will place "the citizens in jeopardy."

Fact: Sheriff Amadeo Ortiz proposed eliminating door security altogether – that means no one entering the courthouse would have to pass through monitors or any type of security. Instead of eliminating door security the proposed budget privatizes door security monitors, saving money in the process. As for the bailiffs, the County already employs nearly twice the legal requirement to protect the civil and criminal courts, and the budget proposal would still leave at least two bailiffs assigned to each criminal court with a pool of bailiffs to rotate throughout the two buildings as needed.

DSABC: David Smith's budget proposal includes closing the patrol substations.

Fact: There is no recommendation in the proposed budget to close patrol substations. This was a decision made unilaterally by the Sheriff's Office and the Sheriff's Office maintains that public safety is not affected.

DSABC: David Smith is "mysteriously" finding revenues he had not projected before.

Fact: The process of forming a budget is a fluid one that changes constantly as revenue and expenditure projections become realized as concrete numbers.

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Until the County Auditor can certify revenue amounts as actual, the Budget Office must rely on projections, and by law, the Commissioners Court and the Budget Office may only budget those revenues that have been certified by the County Auditor. And even after the budget is adopted by Commissioners Court on Sept. 15, the job of the Budget Office and the Auditor's Office is to continue to adjust those projections as revenues and expenditures are realized.

DSABC: There is not a budget shortfall because at the same time the budget proposal includes job deletions, it includes new capital expenditures.

Fact: The union is confusing two pots of money — capital money and operating money. Capital expenditures are paid for using borrowed funds paid back over the long term. Think of paying for your house with a 30-year mortgage. Operating funds are recurring expenses, similar to what you have in your household budget for weekly groceries or your electricity bill. You don't take out a 30-year mortgage to pay for groceries.

DSABC: The union is saving the County \$3.5 million by allowing the County to use the 208 beds at the jail annex.

Fact: The actual projection is around \$2 million and, consequently, as a result of the negotiations, the County is creating 8 new detention officer positions, and saving 7 security monitor positions and four detention officer positions that were proposed for deletion. That is 11 saved jobs and 8 new jobs. The detention officers guarding these beds also will earn overtime until those new positions are filled.

DSABC: The County has spent countless millions on the arts, libraries, museums... "there is a \$2.5 million statue on the other side of the courthouse if you want to see what we're talking about."

Fact: The County does not build libraries, the City does. The County has partnered with local groups to build amateur sports fields, contribute money to the development of the river and create a performing arts center — all with hotel and car rental tax revenue that was approved by the voters of Bexar County.

The "\$2.5 million statue" is actually an \$80,000 statue that was paid for with private money — not taxpayer dollars — as a tribute to the legal community of this County. One can only assume that the \$2.5 million figure referred to is the total cost of the County's redevelopment of the front of the courthouse. The lion's share of that money went toward much needed drainage improvements so the courthouse basement would no longer flood any time it rained any amount.

A complete copy of the proposed budget can be found online at www.bexar.org/prm.