LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER
CLARA SHORTRIDGE FOLTZ CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER

210 WEST TEMPLE STREET, 19th FLOOR
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012
(213) 974-2811/Fax (213) 625-5031
http://pubdef.lacounty.gov

RICARDO D. GARCÍA
Public Defender

Justine M. Es ack
Chief Deputy

John Mathews II
Chief of Staff

ADOPTED
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

July 14, 2026

34-B July 14, 2026

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Edward Yen
EDWARD YEN
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AUTHORIZE THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER TO EMPLOY ONE RETIRED COUNTY EMPLOYEE ON A TEMPORARY BASIS AND GRANT AN EXCEPTION TO THE 180-DAY WAITING PERIOD REQUIRED UNDER THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' PENSION REFORM ACT

(ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS)
(3 VOTES)

SUBJECT

The Los Angeles County Public Defender requests the Board's approval to grant an exception to the 180-day waiting period required under the California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) of 2013 before employing retired County employees as 120-day rehired retirees. The Department affirms that the retiree is highly skilled and that the work she will be performing is critical.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:

1. Waive the 180-day break in service requirement and reemploy retired County employee, Donna Koch, to a 120-day temporary assignment as a Deputy Public Defender IV in the Employee Relations Unit.

2. Approve the request for Donna Koch to receive compensation at the rate of $104.89 per hour and work no more than 960 work hours within a fiscal year, upon the Board's approval of her temporary reemployment as a Deputy Public Defender IV.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Public Defender's request to waive the 180-day break-in-service requirement is intended to provide critical staffing support and maintain operational continuity within the Employee Relations Unit. This request is necessitated by a 50% reduction in management-level staffing resulting from the incumbent's departure, combined with the lack of qualified internal candidates possessing the employment and labor law expertise needed to manage the department's ongoing litigations, labor relations, and personnel matters. Granting the waiver would help ensure uninterrupted service delivery, preserve institutional knowledge, and support the timely handling of complex employment matters while long-term staffing solutions are being evaluated.

The Department has partnered with the Chief Executive Office and the Department of Human Resources staff to identify and implement recruitment strategies aimed at attracting qualified management-level candidates with specialized employment and labor law expertise to serve as Head Deputy over the Employee Relations Unit. These collaborative efforts include updating the Head Deputy Public Defender class specification to expand countywide recruitment opportunities, increasing outreach to external candidates from the general public, and evaluating long-term staffing solutions to strengthen the Department's ability to effectively manage complex employee and labor relations matters.

Ms. Koch, Senior Deputy County Counsel, served for decades as the liaison between the Office of County Counsel and the Public Defender's Office prior to her retirement from County service earlier this year. Through this role, she developed extensive institutional knowledge of the Department, its operation, and all pending litigation, labor relations, and personnel matters. Her familiarity with the Department and subject-matter expertise will allow her to immediately assume the role and provide critical support with minimal transition time. Ms. Koch's extensive experience in civil litigation, labor relations, and personnel matters will provide essential operational relief and continuity during the recruitment, selection, and transition of a new Head Deputy Public Defender for the Employee Relations Unit, anticipated in early 2027.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Approval of the recommended actions is consistent with the County's Strategic Plan North Star III, Realize Tomorrow's Government Today.

FISCAL IMPACT / FINANCING

The Department will utilize an existing budgeted, vacant Head Deputy Public Defender item. Ms. Koch's employment to a 120-day temporary assignment will not result in any additional cost to the County. Although the position and 120-day retiree appointments are subject to the Hard-Hiring Freeze approved by your Board on February 3, 2026, the Chief Executive Office approved the Department's exception request on May 21, 2026, for Ms. Koch's temporary assignment as a Deputy Public Defender IV.

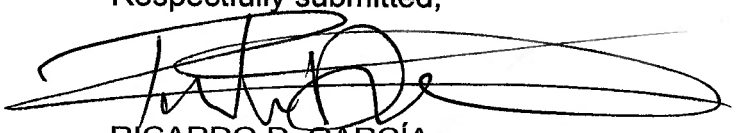
FACTS AND PROVISION/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The recommended action is consistent with the California Public Employee's Pension Reform Act of 2013, which allows a person who retired from County service to serve without reinstatement from retirement or loss or interruption of benefits provided by the retirement system before a period of 180 days following the date of retirement if the Board certifies the position is critically needed and the retiree possesses the critical skills to perform the work in limited duration.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

The recommended actions will provide the Department with critical staffing support to address operational gaps resulting from the departure of key management personnel, which has significantly reduced the Department's capacity to manage ongoing litigation, labor relations, and personnel matters.

Respectfully submitted,



RICARDO D. GARCÍA
Public Defender

RDG:JE:BD

Enclosures

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Auditor-Controller
Human Resources
Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Association