

LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT



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ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
Mayor

May 3, 2010

Mr. Steven Mauldin
KCBS2/KCAL9
CBS Studio City
4200 Radford Avenue
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Mr. Mauldin:

This correspondence is to bring to your attention an investigative report which may contain some incomplete information. Since the segment is reportedly scheduled to air on Thursday May 6, 2010, the scope of the omissions cannot be fully measured; however, the positive relationship and mutual respect that the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has fostered with the media, including KCBS2/KCAL9, dictates that we provide you with critical additional information.

As you know, Investigative Reporter David Goldstein is preparing a report on the use of "confidential license plates" similar to the April 2008 report in the *Orange County Register*. Mr. Goldstein has learned that some agencies responsible for processing parking fines have amassed significant numbers of unpaid citations for vehicles registered under the provisions of a confidential license plate program. Since the late 1970s, individuals in qualifying occupations may request that their personal information be shielded in the California Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) database. The program is designed to protect the individual and their families. In many cases the vehicles registered under these protections are second and third vehicles used exclusively by family members.

Agencies processing citations on vehicles with confidential plates must go through a labor-intensive process of identifying the registered owner, their employer, and a name and address of the person authorized by that employer to receive confidential notifications. To meet the California Vehicle Code standard, the agency processing the collection must issue a letter or other official notification before a report of non-payment can be made to the DMV for further action such as registration renewal holds.

According to the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, in the City of LA, citations issued to vehicles with confidential plates are paid promptly at a rate of 70 percent. That far exceeds the 45 percent prompt pay-rate of the general public.

Mr. Steven Mauldin
KCBS2/KCAL9
Page 2

On April 29, 2010, Mr. Goldstein and other members of the media were invited to and attended the LAPD Recognition Day where a number of LAPD command and staff officers were honoring the recipients of the Department's highest awards. It was at this event that Mr. Goldstein chose to confront an assistant chief with documents indicating that he had 18 unpaid parking tickets.

Based on our inquiry into the matter, the assistant chief in question had never been notified about the citations for a vehicle that a member of his family had operated. Our Internal Affairs Division has begun to conduct an investigation and has thus far determined, that beginning in February 2010, the City of Los Angeles and a vendor issued letters for the first time since 2002, to agencies employing users of confidential plates who have unpaid citations. It has been determined that the letters received by the LAPD were not forwarded to the concerned employees. This administrative oversight is being investigated and appropriate action will be taken.

Considering the excellent working relationship that we enjoy with KCBS2/KCAL9, I am hopeful that in the future, your reporters and producers will not feel the need to ambush LAPD personnel. Had your reporter requested an interview in advance, the assistant chief would have spoken to the reporter once he had an opportunity to investigate the facts.

The concerned assistant chief has paid the outstanding fines and two other LAPD officers have been put on notice to make payment without unnecessary delay. Finally, we are taking steps to ensure that notifications regarding confidential plates are acted upon promptly.

Very truly yours,

CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

MARY GRADY, Public Information Director
Commanding Officer
Public Information Office