

Titus County

Sheriff's Office

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John P. Livingston
Chief Deputy

Commissioner's Court Address

Monday, September 23, 2014

Titus County Courthouse

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow Titus County employees, commissioners, Judge, and Citizens of Titus County. I am Lt. Michael Garcia with the Titus County Sheriff's Office Jail Division. I am a dedicated employee for Titus County, and I have served faithfully now for just over 9 years, I really enjoy the people I work with, the service I do, and more importantly, the Citizens of Titus County I serve. The first thing I want to say is we are all grateful for the current benefits, and employment Titus County has given us, and please do not interpret what I am about to say as anything less. I want to speak to you today about the possibility of this court cutting employee benefits. Every County in Texas operates about the same way as Titus County does, therefore has about the same assets and liabilities. We all know that the biggest assets most counties have are its employees and the property it has. The reason I say most is because some counties, through administrative actions, have turned its employees from assets to liabilities, why would a county do this you ask? Well even though the intention it had of saving money was good, the outcome was catastrophic. They saved money by cutting employee benefits, pay and even hours forcing the dedicated professional employees to seek employment elsewhere so they could support their families adequately. These actions created an unprofessional, untrained, and even uncaring environment for the office they work in and the service they were supposed to provide for the citizens of that county. Speaking on the behalf of the Sheriff's Office, this is a business. It's a business that creates revenue and a business that assumes an even greater liability. The customers we serve are you, the citizens of this county. I am sure you have heard the term "you get what you pay for". We do the jobs that you can't do, or don't want to do, to protect you, your family and friends, providing all of us a safe place to live and raise our families, yet some of you say let's cut benefits and fair compensation, to save us a few bucks. The "clients" we tend to are the murderers, sexual predators, drug dealers, thieves, and even the mentally incapacitated, just to name a few, and BTW your jail currently has all those I just listed. Most of the "clients" that local LE encounter or come through the doors of the jail are innocent until proven guilty. I use the term innocent because they have numerous rights and privileges, that creates the same amount of liabilities. There are a vast amount of laws we in law enforcement must enforce, and even more we have to follow. If we violate just one of those laws or rights of one the violators we encounter, unintentionally mind you, that officer faces a huge amount of personal liability, but the county and its tax payers face an even larger amount of financial liability. What does this matter you ask, here is just a small

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example of what you pay for, it matters because you have a jail administrator that knows all of the laws, rights and privileges that all inmates are entitled to, he constantly ensures all of the regulations are adhered to ALL the time. We have highly trained professional jail staff that perform the day to day operations of the jail, enforcing, following, adhering to regulations to ensure a safe, clean, jail limiting the liability as much as possible, doing this 24 hours a day 365 days a year. They face danger all 12 hours of their shift, physical danger, mental danger, and even financial and civil danger. Last year alone 3 jailers got spit in their face by inmates, one of those inmates has hepatitis, that jailer has to live with that fear of knowing he could have that diseases and carry it home to his family, he also has the mental burden to carry with that. Do you know who that jailer is? Me. The other 2 jailers are in this courtroom and have the same fear and danger as I do. Also just this past weekend, because a dedicated jailer was performing his duties to the letter, he observed an inmate trying to hang himself; he stopped a suicide from happening. I can't even think of what the county would have been facing liability wise had the jailer not been professional in his duties and cared about the job he or she does. It is very frustrating because every year a small handful of people come to this court trying to destroy everything we do for the citizens of this county. They say they do it to help the taxpayers, but the reality is it will only be more expensive in the long run to fix it after it is broken. Another observation that needs to be made is why are we the only taxing entity that gets attacked? We have other taxing entities that have to make adjustments to the tax rate like we do to serve the public. These other entities are the school district, the hospital, the college, and the city of Mt Pleasant. All these entities have to make adjustments to operate effectively so they can do their jobs, they adjust the tax rate and no one attacks them, yet we get attacked when all we are trying to do is serve our community like all the taxing entities do. Please do not handicap us by making decision that will keep us from employing qualified people. We ask that you would make the right decisions for the citizens of Titus County and for the employees that serve the citizens of Titus County by not making cuts that will rid Titus County of its good employees. Thank you Very much.

Respectfully,

Lieutenant Michael Garcia