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Grand jury says cuts go too far

by Jose Torres

What's going on in state and local government, as far as outsourcing public sector jobs and trying in vain to balance the budget on the backs of cops and firefighters, is nothing short of criminal.

Some would say the term "criminal" might be overdoing it. But a grand jury in Sacramento, California

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Kristin Haley has always been proud of her husband Dan, a trooper with the Colorado State Police. Now she's prouder than ever. Story, page 14.



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A member of the Oregon State Police SWAT team searches near a home in the Bayshore community of Waldport. Oregon police were searching for 43-year-old David Anthony Durham, suspected of shooting and critically wounding an officer on the Oregon coast. (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer)

Cop killings skyrocket

by Mark Nichols

At the time this article was written, ten police officers had been shot and killed in the first three weeks of January 2011. There were four cops murdered in Florida alone. In just a 24-hour period, 11 officers were shot in five different states.

Thousands of law enforcement officers gathered inside the American Airlines Arena for the funerals for two slain Miami-Dade police officers. As colleagues, friends and family paid their respects, news quickly spread that two more officers had been shot and killed in St.

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Theresa Chambers never gave up the fight after she was improperly terminated from her position. Her seven-year battle paid off.

Vindicated at long last

Reinstatement ordered, award could top \$2 million

by Cynthia Brown

After a seven-year battle that would have knocked a less committed, courageous person out of the ring early, former U.S. Park Police Chief Teresa Chambers has had all charges against her dismissed by the Merit Systems Protection Board.

The Board ordered that Chief

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Teresa Chambers gets her job back

Continued from page one

Chambers be reinstated as the Chief of the United States Park Police within 20 days of the decision and that the agency reimburse her for back pay, interest on the back pay, and other benefits as well as attorneys' fees and other legal costs. The dollar value of money owed to Chief Chambers could be upwards of \$2 million.

It was a sweet victory after a stressful, expensive slog through the legal system. "My goal was always to go back to my job as chief of the Park Police," Chambers said. She was serving as chief at the Riverdale Park Police Department in Maryland when the decision was issued. She resumed her duties at the U.S. Park Police on January 31.

Chambers was a 27-year law enforcement veteran, six of those years working on the executive level, when she was fired by officials from the Department of the Interior for giving an interview to the *Washington Post* where she stated she did not have adequate resources in the post-9/11 environment to provide law enforcement protection to people visiting national parks and historic sites as well as protect the sites themselves.

As chief of the U.S. Park Police, Teresa Chambers was responsible for the security of some of America's most valued historical sites, including the Washington Monument, the Statue of Liberty, the Golden Gate Bridge area, and the area surrounding the White

House – all top targets for a terrorist attack.

The *Post* interview ran on December 2, 2003.

Written by reporter David A. Fahrenthold, with the headline "Park Police Duties Exceed Staffing," Chambers was quoted as saying traffic accidents had increased on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, where two, instead of the recommended four, officers were on patrol.

She also noted that she did not have enough manpower to protect the national park land in the District of Columbia.

On December 5 Chief Chambers was stripped of her gun and badge, placed on non-duty status, and escorted out of the building by armed National Park Service Special Agents back



As chief of the U.S. Parks Police, Teresa Chambers and her officers are responsible for policing the nation's national parks, like Yellowstone, Yosemite and Big Horn Canyon, and also landmarks like Alcatraz and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

Washington Post supports Chambers

Park Police Chief Teresa Chambers is vindicated
Washington Post
Friday, January 14, 2011

TERESA C. CHAMBERS was fired in 2004 for telling the truth. As chief of the U.S. Park Police, she told The Post in 2003 that her department was understaffed. It had been forced to cut back on patrols beyond the Mall, she said, because of Interior Department orders requiring more officers to guard downtown monuments in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks.

"Traffic accidents have increased on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, which now often has two officers on patrol instead of the recommended four," Ms. Chambers explained, adding that "in neighborhood areas . . . residents are complaining that homeless people and drug dealers are again taking over smaller parks."

She did not breach federal law by revealing classified information. Nor did her statements put lives at stake; if anything, her honest appraisal served to alert the public and lawmakers to real dangers.

But her embarrassed superiors at the Interior Department nevertheless retaliated, first by stripping her of her gun and badge and ultimately by removing her from the post. Ms. Chambers, a civil servant, fought back in a lengthy and labyrinthine journey through administrative bodies and federal courts that probably would have been prohibitively expensive had she not been aided by nonprofit public interest groups. This week, she won a decisive victory that calls for her reinstatement as chief of the Park Police; she was also awarded back pay.

The thorough and thoroughly convincing opinion by the Merit Systems Protection Board concluded that Ms. Chambers was improperly fired in a classic act of retaliation against a whistleblower. The Interior Department pointed to other infractions allegedly committed by Ms. Chambers that it said justified the disciplinary action, but the board concluded that the department probably would not have moved against the chief absent her protected whistleblowing comments to the media.

The Obama administration has not yet announced whether it will appeal the outcome; it should not. Civil servants who put the interests of the public ahead of their own should be applauded, not dismissed.

to the United States Park Police Headquarters. When Chief Chambers questioned this treatment, normally reserved for people accused of criminal acts, Dept. of Interior officials refused to explain their behavior.

One week later, officials called her in and told her they would not pursue administrative charges against her if she would agree to a permanent gag order along with a reduction in her powers as chief. In addition, her First Amendment rights would be restricted, she would abdicate the right to freely communicate with Congress, and she would be forced to commit an illegal prohibited personnel act by transferring a whistleblower.

When she refused to agree, the agency's response was to force her to take an administrative leave for seven months. She was fired in July, 2004.

A U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in April of this year that Chambers' statements were a contributing factor in the agency's decision to take adverse action against her and that these actions

were protected under the Whistleblower Protection Act.

"I owe a special debt of gratitude to the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) including Executive Director Jeff Ruch, PEER attorneys, associate attorneys, and staff members for their unwavering support and vigorous defense of this case," Chambers said.

"I would also like to thank the National Treasury Employees Union attorneys and members for their expertise and advocacy throughout."

She also sends heartfelt thanks to the hundreds of thousands of supporters who stood with her throughout her long fight for justice. "Their words of wisdom and support gave me the strength to keep on fighting," she said.

For more information on the Teresa Chambers' seven year ordeal, visit www.honestchief.com. Visitors can learn more about the battle, read pertinent documents, and listen to audio tapes of press releases, stories, and interviews regarding the case.