



May 14, 2009

Steve Cooley, Los Angeles County District Attorney
210 West Temple Street, Suite 18000
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3210

Dear Mr. Cooley:

We urge you to immediately open an investigation into yesterday's incident in which an El Monte police officer was videotaped as he viciously kicked a suspect in the head while the man was lying on the ground with his arms and legs spread.

This was an egregious abuse of force against a suspect who had apparently already surrendered. The kick served no law enforcement purpose. It was unlawful punishment, seemingly for leading the police on a pursuit. Whatever the suspect may or may not have done to justify his arrest, punishment in our system of justice is meted out by courts following fair trials, not by lone officers using physical force as they see fit.

Based on the evidence on the videotape, we have called for this officer to be suspended immediately by the El Monte Police Department, and we are pleased that the department has removed him from active duty. We are also pleased the EMPD has asked the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to investigate the incident. However, we believe it's important for you to initiate a thorough and independent investigation of this very troubling incident to determine whether criminal charges are warranted.

The El Monte Police Department prides itself on its community policing and close interpersonal relationships with residents and business partners. Its motto is "Courtesy and Service." In a case such as this, the residents of El Monte deserve reassurance that disturbing behavior by one of their police officers will be investigated and, if the officer's actions are confirmed to be unwarranted, swiftly and appropriately penalized.

Sincerely,

Ramona Ripston

cc: El Monte Police Chief Tom Armstrong
El Monte Mayor Ernest Gutierrez