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EDITOR'S NOTE

Blank check

Sacramento sheriff's department racks up legal bills while fighting oversight

BY **FOON RHEE** / foonr@newsreview.com



PHOTO BY FOON RHEE

department's number of employees and seven-year history of claims.

If supervisors don't approve that payment, that would force the sheriff to cut programs or staff to make up the difference. And you can be sure that Jones would accuse supervisors of endangering public safety.

Supervisor Patrick Kennedy, who has been critical of Jones, says if the board tries to withhold

money for legal judgments, there is a "real possibility" that patrols in neighborhoods will be cut back.

That's why, Kennedy says, he supports Sacramento Assemblyman Kevin McCarty's bill to authorize sheriff oversight boards through action by supervisors or voters. Assembly Bill 1185 passed the Assembly on May 29 and the Senate Public Safety Committee on July 2, with the deadline for a bill to pass this session on Sept. 13.

In Sacramento County, Jones won reelection last year and has stared down supervisors over oversight of his department.

Jones publicly feuded with Rick Braziel, then the inspector general, after the former Sacramento police chief released a report last year criticizing three sheriff's deputies who fired 28 shots and killed Mikel McIntyre in 2017.

In August 2018, the sheriff locked out Braziel from department facilities. Since Braziel's contract expired, Jones has been jockeying with supervisors over the authority of the next inspector general. Only one candidate applied; supervisors have hired a headhunter to try to get a replacement on the job this fall.

In July, the Sacramento County Grand Jury, a group of citizen-volunteers, declared that Jones didn't break the law by blocking Braziel. But the grand jury also said that supervisors aren't doing enough to hold the sheriff accountable. It called for supervisors to create a new oversight commission, similar to the one proposed in McCarty's bill.

All the legal bills are only more evidence of why a closer watch on the sheriff's department is warranted.