



St. Louis Area Police Chiefs Association

— The voice of professional law enforcement in the St. Louis Area —

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This message is to provide the position of the more than 70 policing agencies that comprise the St. Louis Area Police Chiefs Association (SLAPCA) regarding the suggestions of Better Together to disband municipal policing as part of an initiative to merge St. Louis City and County.

The Better Together suggestion is based upon information gathered in 2014 and published in April of 2015 by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). It is important to note that not one police chief or command staff member from any SLAPCA member municipality was interviewed or asked for any input by Better Together. In addition, no Board Member or employee of Better Together is or has been a law enforcement officer, let alone been a commander or manager of law enforcement officers.

In the years since the PERF report was released, law enforcement in St. Louis learned some valuable lessons. The most important lesson was that there needed to be community policing with a true connection to the people in the community. That can only be established with a continuity of contact and service that allows better understanding for and from everyone involved. The Better Together plan ignores that lesson and seeks to return to a policing structure disconnected from the very communities it alleges it wishes to help. In fact, their own PERF report directly contradicts their suggestions. There will and can be no guarantee of continuity of officers and command staff in the sprawling organization suggested. Better Together offers political representatives to communities in place of their policing representatives who are actually there on the streets in their communities. Citizens would lose any voice in policing activities when they become 1 in 1.5 million. That is certainly not the case now when voices, whether happy, sad, afraid or angry can find a commander within a few minutes travel from their home.

SLAPCA is a professional organization reborn from the lessons of Ferguson. Where five years ago, less than 25% of the SLAPCA agencies were accredited or in the process of attaining accreditation by an independent state or national agency, now approximately 90% are. Our accreditation ratio is now thirty times the national average. SLAPCA has gone even further, requiring all members to go through the independent accreditation process to continue membership. SLAPCA is an integrated and coordinated group of professional law enforcement officers which Better Together portrays as incapable, but actually are graduates of the FBI National Academy, hold PhD's and Masters degrees, are members of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), National Homicide Investigators Association (NHIA), National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Officers (NOBLE) and many more professional law enforcement organizations. Members of SLAPCA are as diverse in their cultures, race and religious backgrounds as their communities are, but are a cohesive group of men and women with a mission to improve law enforcement in St. Louis through learning from each other, their communities, and training locally, nationally and internationally.

Better Together has ignored years of learning and improvements that Ferguson brought to St. Louis law enforcement and suggests returning to a structure that unfortunately would almost certainly result in another such crisis in this community. As such, SLAPCA stands firmly and unanimously against such unsupported suggestions and drastic unprofessional initiatives.