

SANGAMON COUNTY BOARD DEMOCRATS

February 5, 2025

Massey Commission
VIA EMAIL

Re: Investigation by Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

Dear Members of the Massey Commission:

At your first meeting in October, my fellow county board member, Gina Lathan, and I presented to you on the need to request an independent investigation of the hiring practices and the policies of the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department. Overwhelmingly, you voted in favor of this recommendation and sent a request to the U.S. Department of Justice, the Illinois Attorney General, and the Illinois State Police.

In November, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice announced it would investigate the actions of the SCSD and Central Dispatch. The initial demand for documentation from the county was due to the DOJ by mid December.

By January 16, 2025, the DOJ's Civil Rights Division announced that it was closing its investigation on the basis of a 2 year agreement with the County requiring the review of its policies, practices, and procedures while relaying reports made of discriminatory conduct. The agreement specifically did not cover hiring practices, which is what most directly led to Sonya Massey's tragic killing. My gut reaction was that this investigation was short circuited – likely due to the impending restoration of the Trump presidency.

My concerns, unfortunately, were accurate. USA Today reported that the outgoing Biden Administration's DOJ Civil Rights Division Director conceded that the Division sought to wrap up as many investigations as possible and enter into police reform agreements that might have the best chance of success.

(<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/01/18/kristen-clarke-doj-police-reform-trump-rollbacks/77716703007/>)

Within the first couple of days of the new Trump Administration it was reported that the new DOJ leadership is directing a review of any agreements entered into in the last 90 days of the Biden Administration “and suggested reconsidering agreements negotiated by the Biden administration to overhaul local police departments”.

(<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/01/23/justice-department-freezes-civil-rights-litigation/77901491007/>)

It is obvious that the Agreement between Sangamon County and the DOJ will not be adequately enforced, if it is enforced at all.

Furthermore, the request to the DOJ, the Illinois Attorney General, and the Illinois State Police was "to conduct a full review of the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department hiring practices, procedures, review of complaints, disciplinary actions, and such other subject matter as said agencies deem relevant". Only from having the full view of the mistakes made can we, as a county government, learn from them. The need for this investigation to bring to light what acts or omissions occurred that resulted in Sonya Massey's murder by a county deputy continues. Otherwise, the Massey Commission, in its work, does not know what it does not know.

In light of the recent developments at the DOJ, we are asking Massey ***Commission to renew its call for an outside review through the Illinois Attorney General's Office and/or State Police.*** Further, as agreed to by the Commission in October, if those do not publicly agree to conduct a review in a reasonable period of time, a Request for Proposal (RFP) should be published seeking an independent investigator.

Time is of the essence. Therefore, the ***Commission should also publish an RFP for an independent investigator.***

The Massey Commission, the Massey family, and the people of Sangamon County deserve the answers that a timely, thorough, and thoughtful investigation would yield.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tony DelGiorno
District 23
Democratic Leader

 2025 08:47 CST

Marc Ayers
District 12



Gina Lathan
District 22



Sam Cahnman (Feb 5, 2025 14:50 CST)

Sam Cahnman
District 18



Vera Small (Feb 5, 2025 15:39 CST)

Vera Small
District 19

 2025 08:49 CST

Kevin McGuire
District 28