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Deputies in Chippewa County Issue Statement on Sheriff Travis Hakes

CHIPPEWA FALLS, Wis. – On Wednesday, the state's largest law enforcement group, the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA), issued the following statement on behalf of its members employed by the Chippewa County Sheriff's Department:

Since the much-publicized controversy involving Sheriff Travis Hakes first began in the summer of 2023, the deputies that comprise the Chippewa County Deputy Sheriff's Association (CCDSA) have been regularly approached by both members of the general public and officers from surrounding law enforcement agencies who inquire for our views on this matter. Out of respect for the principle of due process, and a general aversion to speaking out publicly on an active investigation involving a superior officer, our association and its members resisted engaging in those discussions. Upon conclusion of the investigation, these continued inquiries remain a significant distraction for many in our department as well as our community. After a great deal of thought and consternation, the CCDSA's members voted unanimously to respond with a statement regarding the county's investigation into Sheriff Hakes.

As law enforcement officers, we rely upon our credibility to do our jobs. Evidence of any individual officer's dishonesty can undermine the officer's ability to testify in court and impair a district attorney's ability to prosecute crimes involving that officer. As a result of the investigation, there are legitimate concerns that Sheriff Hakes' involvement in any cases handled by the Chippewa County Sheriff's Office might jeopardize our capacity to enforce the law. The understanding of the CCDSA is that Sheriff Hakes has agreed to avoid participating in criminal investigations at the request of the command staff. This unprecedented situation casts an unfair and embarrassing shadow on the deputies that have sworn to uphold their oath to protect and serve the public.

The CCDSA and its members feel compelled to publicly express that we are greatly troubled by Sheriff Hakes' conduct and the impact that his actions have had on our agency. While we have great respect for the Office of Sheriff, regardless of who holds it or the political party to which they belong, we have uniformly concluded that the allegations of conduct and dishonesty by Sheriff Hakes that were substantiated throughout the county's investigation do not reflect the values of our agency and the deputies that serve the public. The CCDSA believes that law enforcement must be held to the same standard with regard to our conduct, regardless of the position held within our agency. Though we recognize our obligation to work with Sheriff Hakes as our superior, we cannot condone his actions.

The dedicated men and women of the CCDSA are deeply committed to keeping our county a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.