



MICHAEL N. FEUER

CITY ATTORNEY

April 28, 2020

Honorable Members
Budget and Finance Committee
City Clerk via Novus

SUBJECT: 2020-21 PROPOSED BUDGET

Honorable Members:

It's been a privilege to work even more steadfastly than ever with you and the Mayor as, together, we rise to the multiple challenges posed by a world turned upside down by the coronavirus crisis. Not only must our Office play a key role in moving the vital work of the City forward on myriad fronts, protect scarce taxpayer dollars in court, and effectively run one of the nation's largest prosecutor's offices, all in exceptional circumstances. The crisis also calls on us, now and for the indefinite future, to take extraordinary additional measures to protect Angelenos' health and safety.

We're a leader in the nation in combatting scams like non-FDA-approved virus test kits and prosecuting price gouging of necessities. We're enforcing and defending the Mayor's *Safer at Home* order and heading a campaign to address domestic, elder and child abuse temporarily hidden from view. Often going above and beyond already high expectations -- as are so many City employees -- our team exemplifies the best of City government:

- **Municipal Counsel attorneys** spend countless hours working with the Mayor's Office, your Council, the Chief Legislative Analyst, City Administrative Officer and many departments including LAPD, HCID and Personnel, expeditiously drafting *Safer at Home* and other protective Mayoral orders, ordinances including tenant and worker protections, telecommuting directives, ongoing emergency contracting guidelines, and agreements with hotels offering housing for first responders and individuals experiencing homelessness, while continuing to advise all City departments and commissions on their operations and transactional needs during this unprecedented time.
- **Civil Litigators** continue to defend the City in lawsuits, including successfully holding off challenges by gun rights activists and businesses to the *Safer at Home* order, in both Federal and State court. At the same time, litigators continue to defend high exposure police, employment and dangerous condition cases at a time when proposed reductions in the Liability Claims budget may dictate the need for more litigation support or an increased use of outside counsel.
- **Criminal Prosecutors** continue to protect the most vulnerable in our City, including those victimized by family violence, and child and elder abuse, at a time when isolation means more danger at home for many. As noted, we have filed criminal cases against price gougers who have artificially inflated prices on essential goods, and, through civil litigation, were the first in the nation to take on scams promoting fake testing. Our Neighborhood Prosecutors have been working alongside the Mayor's office and LAPD enforcing the *Safer at Home* order against non-compliant, non-essential businesses. In addition, criminal courts remain open and there has been a dramatic uptick in electronic case filings by LAPD.

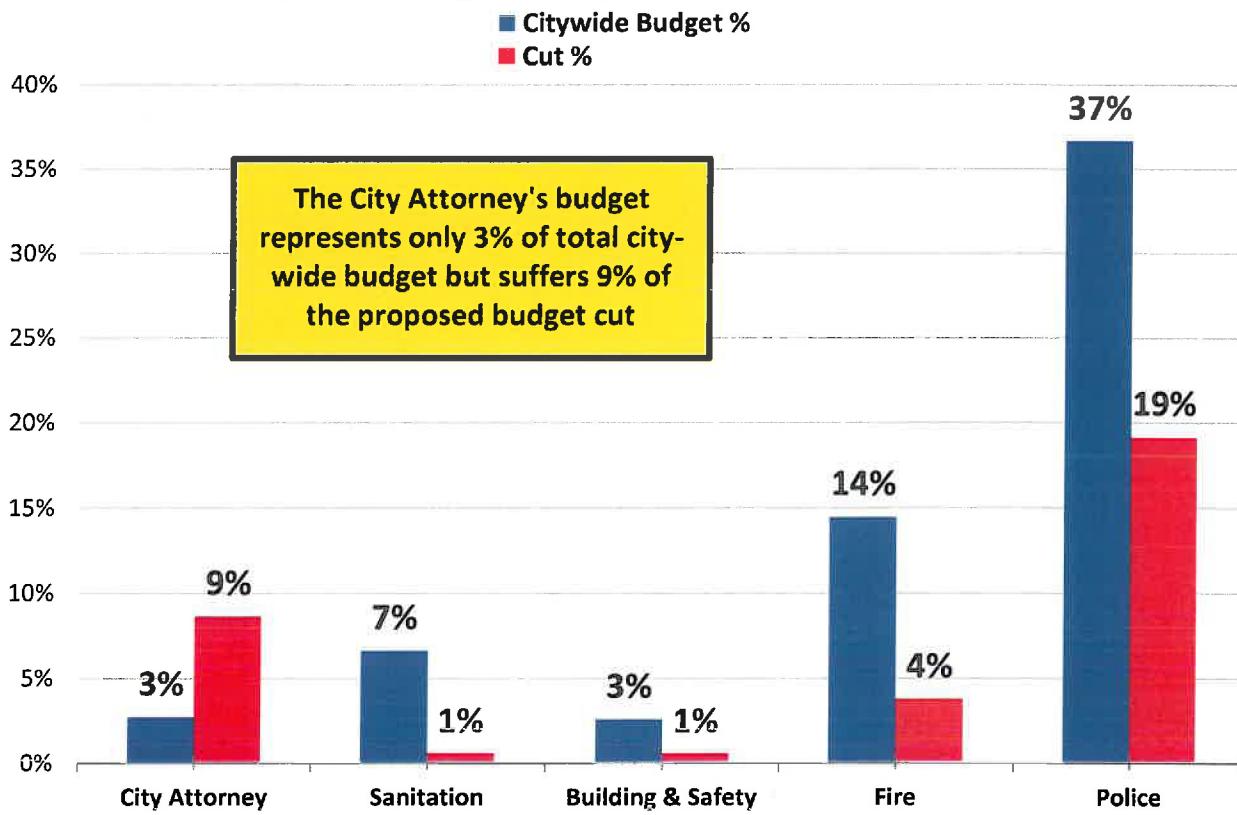
Ideally soon we'll also turn to active, essential efforts to help the City, its residents and its businesses to recover.

With the total economic impact of the virus not yet clear and the reality of severely declining revenues, I share concerns about the City's fiscal stability and support efforts to find critical savings to get us through the time ahead. And, I understand that the City Attorney's Office must share in the burden.

Unlike past fiscal emergencies, however, the COVID-19 crisis will continue to require even more of our Office, not less. Yet, the proposed budget would cut a stunning \$21 million in salary funds from the City Attorney's Office, the equivalent of a 18.6% reduction in FTE hours in our Office. This is both a staggering amount in absolute terms, and a disproportionate cut to our Office.

As demonstrated in the chart below, based on the CAO's *Supplemental Information for the 20-21 Proposed Budget*, this Office represents less than 3% of the City's budget for departmental operations. But the proposed budget would take 9% of the total proposed cuts from our Office alone. By any standard, this dramatic reduction, three times more than our share of the budget, is not tenable.

CITY ATTORNEY TAKES A DISPROPORTIONATE CUT



Source: The 2020-21 Proposed Budget, Supplemental Information for Budget & Finance Committee

2020-21 Proposed Budget, Page 6

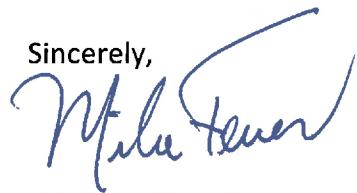
2020-21 Proposed Budget Changes by Category, Efficiencies to Services, Page 133

While this Office is very willing to contribute its share to help meet the City's financial challenges, as a result of this disparity, I am **requesting restoration of a portion of this cut**, to allow the essential work of this Office to continue. In addition, I am requesting the flexibility to manage hiring in my Office to meet the salary budget provided. A hiring freeze request, currently being drafted, highlights both the essential nature of the work being done and the urgency of hiring behind many of those who have left the office.

In short, I urge the Council to reconsider a cut that would dramatically diminish our crucial work on behalf of our residents and employees. We are critical partners in keeping the City safe and protecting our City's treasury -- both absolutely essential at a time of vulnerability -- and I look forward to our continued work together.

Thank you for your consideration. As always, if you have any questions, please contact me or Leela Kapur, Chief of Staff.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL N. FEUER
Los Angeles City Attorney

cc: Honorable Members of the City Council
Sharon Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst
Rich Llewellyn, City Administrative Officer