



Oct. 29, 2021

Sheriff Bill Gore
9621 Ridgehaven Court
San Diego, CA 92123

Dear Sheriff Gore,

At a meeting earlier this month of the Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board (CLERB), the board voted to recommend that the sheriff's department stop routinely requesting that autopsy reports for in-custody deaths be sealed.

The San Diego Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists is writing to urge you to accept CLERB's recommendation. The medical examiner's report is often the only information available to the public when someone dies in law enforcement custody. These reports can flag a lapse in treatment and help the department update its protocols — Ruben Nunez, who died from water intoxication in 2016, is one such example. They can also show that a death was unpreventable and staff did everything possible to save a person's life.

When a case is sealed, the public — including next-of-kin — have to wait months to learn basic details.

We agree with CLERB Executive Officer Paul Parker that routinely [sealing these cases](#) "...limits transparency, creating distrust in the investigatory process while raising additional questions and concerns about the circumstances under which inmates are treated while in SDSD custody."

We understand that reports may need to be sealed in some rare instances, but we urge you to err on the side of public disclosure whenever possible. Please accept CLERB's recommendation to help provide more transparency for the public. Should you have any questions for us, please email: spjsandiego@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Board of the San Diego Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists