



**PATRICK "PAT" LABAT**  
FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF

**FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**OP-ED:**

**Setting the Record Straight: A Response to the Fulton County Board of Commissioners' May 7 Resolution, A Resolution to Establish Supplemental Funding for Overtime Pay**

By Sheriff Patrick "Pat" Labat  
*Fulton County Sheriff*

The incredible women and men of the Fulton County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) remain committed to improving jail conditions and welcome collaboration with the Board of Commissioners (BOC), but effective governance must be grounded in truth. This resolution reeks of dog whistle politics, is utterly tone-deaf to the realities our team members face every day and intentionally and falsely mischaracterizes the budget and operations of the agency. While we share the BOC's concern for staffing and safety in the jail, effective solutions require honest assessments, not misleading figures and oversimplified narratives. While we acknowledge what appears to be a step in the right direction, the reality is that the Fulton County Sheriff's Office has faced decades of inadequate funding. The repeated hyperbole from Mr. Bob Ellis is both unproductive and divisive. In contrast, the Fulton County Sheriff's Office executive team has consistently extended an open invitation to all Commissioners since 2024 to meet with them and me biweekly at their convenience. Mr. Ellis has not only declined to participate but has never acknowledged the invitation. Additionally, he has refused to take my phone calls and has not visited the jail in at least the past five years.

*Inaccurate Budget Claims*

The claim that the Sheriff's Office received a 52.5% increase in annual funding from 2021 to 2024 is inaccurate. Our operating budget has only increased by 15% during this period, a figure that accounts for countywide raises and standard inflation adjustments. The bulk of the perceived increase is the result of the transfer of the existing expense related to inmate health services (NaphCare) from one account to another and an increase in the cost associated with food services (Summit). In 2020, inmate health expenses were paid from the County's non-agency fund and were not included in the FCSO budget. However, starting in 2021, these multi-million dollar expenditures were transferred from a Fulton County non-agency account directly into the FCSO budget, creating this false narrative of an increase. These pre-existing mandatory line items include automatic annual increases which continue to drive up costs creating a false appearance of budget increases without actually providing the additional funding we have been repeatedly requesting for core operational needs and innovative programs.

With approximately 90% of our budget already committed to personnel costs, we are left with little room to address emerging needs or pursue initiatives that could enhance public safety and inmate resident security. These figures clearly disprove the suggestion of unchecked budget growth. Documentation supporting factual budget figures has been shared with members of the BOC.

This resolution rings hollow when viewed alongside other funding decisions approved by the BOC. For instance, the Fulton County Police Department, an agency with no statutory obligations, has seen its budget nearly double from \$6.5 million in 2020 to \$12.4 million in 2024, including funding for new vehicles and recruitment tools. Meanwhile, the Sheriff’s Office, which bears the County’s actual constitutional responsibility for jail operations, court security, sex offender supervision, and warrant execution, continues to face underfunding and unrealistic expectations. It is therefore hard to take calls for “fiscal responsibility” seriously when non-mandated agencies are prioritized over those carrying the weight of the law. This resolution does not bring balance to those competing priorities; it reinforces them.

#### *Overtime Fund Limitations*

The issue of overtime is not new to the BOC, but rather is a decades-long crisis that the board has acknowledged year after year but has failed to meaningfully address. At the onset of this administration, the Sheriff’s Office clearly forecasted the severity of our staffing shortages and the internal maneuvering that would be required to identify the millions of dollars to cover critical overtime needs. Overtime is just one of several tools our agency employs to manage the staffing crisis. Our team also implemented reassignments, cross-training, and recruitment initiatives to fill gaps and maintain safety. The BOC has been fully informed and has had every opportunity to act proactively. This resolution is personal, petty, lacks vision and is an overreach of a legislative body attempting to exert control over a duly-elected Constitutional Officer. To that end, a one-time fund with quarterly reviews and limited scope will not adequately resolve this issue. As stipulated by the Department of Justice, the Sheriff’s Office needs a properly funded investment strategy that addresses pay, workload, recruitment, retention, morale and training. Without that, this measure becomes little more than a political maneuver designed by Mr. Ellis to exert control over the Sheriff while accomplishing precious little.

#### *All Sworn Staff Support Jail Operations*

The assertion that only a subset of sworn personnel is focused on the jail shows a lack of knowledge as to how this agency operates. In fact, all sworn personnel are required to support jail operations as jail security is a shared responsibility across the entire agency. For example: Between January 1 and April 30, 2025, members of our Motors, Traffic, and HEAT units worked 1,095 hours inside the jail, and other units across the agency continue to support jail operations daily. These deputies routinely rotate into jail shifts, train on jail protocols, and fill critical posts as needed.

#### *Accountability and Transparency*

This resolution references incidents of officer misconduct and contraband smuggling. Isolated incidents are not evidence of systemic failure; they are proof that our internal controls and partnerships are working. Let me be clear: no law enforcement agency is immune to bad actors. What matters is whether leadership has the courage to hold them accountable and the will to do something about it.

The Fulton County Sheriff’s Office will not tolerate criminal behavior from within. We work closely with the DA’s office to prosecute such violations and just recently, that partnership led to a 40-year

prison sentence for a former detention officer convicted of trafficking contraband into the jail. We hold our personnel to the highest standards and move swiftly when those standards are violated.

The BOC and the public are aware of these incidents because of our commitment to transparency and willingness to confront uncomfortable truths. What's more, many of the safety issues cited in the resolution stem from the deteriorating jail facility the County has failed to adequately maintain. The BOC has expressed no desire to implement meaningful security enhancements, a reflection of continued apathy toward conditions inside the jail. It is demoralizing to weaponize the consequences of operating in an outdated and crumbling facility against the very women and men working tirelessly to hold it all together.

#### *Recruitment and Retention*

Addressing our recruitment and staffing concerns are paramount to fulfilling the mandates of the consent decree and even more integral for enhancing the culture of our team. After having requested a comprehensive staffing analysis for the last four plus years, we are pleased that the Department of Justice has mandated that the BOC comply so that we may optimize staff deployment and scheduling to better meet operational needs. The last in-depth staffing analysis was conducted a decade ago, in 2015. We have identified key recruitment and retention strategies, including career expos, expanded media outreach, streamlined hiring, competitive pay, and hiring bonuses. While neighboring agencies host out-of-state career fairs with strong results, budget constraints have limited our ability to pursue similar efforts. Meanwhile, we continue to lose qualified staff to agencies offering greater incentives to include housing allowances, take-home vehicles, pensions, as well as double and even triple overtime. This resolution fails to acknowledge this competitive landscape or the urgency of retaining experienced personnel, who are essential to training and stabilizing our workforce.

#### *We Are a Full-Service Law Enforcement Agency*

This resolution suggests that I limit all non-core services, including law enforcement duties that overlap with municipal or state agencies. I firmly reject this false dichotomy. Suggesting that our enforcement efforts conflict with jail responsibilities is both misleading and irresponsible. Our team works on the ground every day, executing high-risk warrants and apprehending fugitives, absconded sex offenders, and dangerous or impaired drivers. When needed, these resources are redirected to support jail operations.

Every deputy contributes to jail operations. Every decision concerning the Fulton County Sheriff's Office is made to keep Fulton County safe. I remain committed to fighting for the women and men of the Fulton County Sheriff's Office, those who are in our care and custody and the community at large. The Sheriff's Office will continue to operate as a united, responsive, and mission-driven agency both inside the jail and throughout Fulton County.

**ABOUT THE FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE:** The mission of the Fulton County Sheriff's Office is Service; through laser-focused efforts to protect the citizens of Fulton County with coordinated law enforcement operations, special strategic teams, and community outreach methods. The Sheriff's Office is constitutionally responsible for the security of all courtrooms, executing arrest warrants, and serving civil papers. In addition, the Sheriff's Office is responsible for the administration and operation of the Fulton County Jail.

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