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WE GET LETTERS

A Letter to the Citizens of Springer:

Since my appointment as Chief of Police here in Springer, I have seen a large number of things that do not sit well with me as a law enforcement officer. My first person to person meeting with Mayor Cruz amounted to him handing me a copy of Ordinance 272 with the Mayor's power to hire and fire highlighted. Since that time I have received two more of the same. Mayor Cruz called me at one time on the phone and told me to fire a police officer because of rumors. When I refused he told me to do an investigation on these rumors. I did a thorough investigation and found no wrong doing. This must not have been what he wanted to hear as the officer's probation was extended even though he was off probation. The officer finally resigned. Officer Martinez was placed on administrative leave a few hours after he effected an arrest. He was told to turn in all of his equipment, and told he had no police powers what so ever. When the officer asked what he was being suspended for, Mayor Cruz would not tell him the details. Officer Martinez was not allowed to even sign his suspension. He was later terminated before the Attorney's investigation was complete. Now Officer Mondragon has to ride along with one of the two remaining certified police officers because Mayor Cruz feels that he is not trained well enough to be alone on patrol. Officer Mondragon has ridden

with Officers Aguirre and Martinez and studies his manuals constantly. He has received training through the Law Enforcement TV Network that is accepted by the Department of Public Safety in New Mexico. I have discussed at length with Officer Mondragon different scenarios at traffic stops and handling numerous situations. I am a veteran police officer and feel that this officer is doing well. Mayor Cruz's memo came after an arrest that Officer Mondragon effected. The entire arrest was taped. I went to the Police Station the night of the arrest and okayed what the officer did. I reviewed the tape and agreed that Officer Mondragon had acted professionally and without malice, even when the suspect cursed and accused the officer's wife. I have this tape in evidence if anyone would like to hear it. This tape shows what we officers put up with in one form or another on nearly a daily basis. I feel that most officers I know are doing their work because they are dedicated and because they can make a difference, surely not for the money. We put up with drunks and druggies. Their filthy mouths and attitudes, and disrespect for the law and police. We feel that we received enough hassle from the general public without having to worry about being fired every time we do our job. And, what we do is, in fact our job. We are sworn in by oath to enforce the law on all people, not just a chosen few. As Chief of Police I

have been charged with the running of the Police Department and seeing that the law is enforced. I have found this increasingly harder as law enforcement officers are in and out of here like water through a sieve. Each time we get a good investigation started on some of the crimes and drugs, (which are a lot more than I think you realize) one of the officers gets terminated. I feel that the people of Springer, and the Town Council for that matter, are misinformed on certain issues. I would like to say that Officer Mondragon was hired by Mayor Cruz. Mayor Cruz knew at that time that he was not trained and we had numerous trained officers apply. I was on the interview committee and was never asked what my recommendation was. Mayor Cruz, you are not a Police Officer, nor were you trained to be one. I do not understand why you take these actions upon yourself without even looking into evidence, or questioning the officer in question. Law enforcement is not an easy task, no one likes to get caught in their wrong doing. I feel that since Mayor Cruz obviously does not care about the evidence or the police side of the story, maybe an appointed Police Commissioner to the Department may be in order. This evening's agenda calls for maybe another termination of a police officer. We of course were not told who this officer is. So we all have to wonder what is happening and who, with no chance to prepare a defense. Police Officers have rights too. Being from Springer does not immunize one from obeying the law. I

request at this time that the Council give me a Commissioner as you and I cannot see eye to eye.

Chief Ed Martin

To the People of Springer:

For those of you who don't know me, I am Eileen Martin, Chief Martin's wife. I have been in a law enforcement family my entire adult life. My ex-husband was a career officer and my 21 year old son was killed in the line of duty. He was a police officer in Mountainair and was found shot in the head in the police station.

Most of you don't know what special people good police officers are. The pay is not good, benefits are not good and the hours stink. I can speak from personal experience because I **Live There.**

They carry 15 to 20 pounds of equipment on their bodies every day -- all day. In the heat of the summer, the body armor does not breathe and it is miserably hot. I help Ed remove his body armor in the summer because his t-shirt is so wet, everything sticks together.

When you're home after a day's work, you can relax and sleep and not worry about your job until the next day. The police in this town can't. We have only four and most of the time it is two or three. Ed gets calls all evening and many times in the middle of the night. If an officer has to transport a prisoner to Raton, someone else has to cover for him during his absence. Many times Ed gets home and before he has a chance to eat dinner, he is called out again and doesn't have a

chance to eat until 11:00 or 12:00.

Holidays are no exception. When you are home enjoying your holiday they're out working. Ed worked Thanksgiving, he worked Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and New Year's Day. He worked so his officers could spend time with their families.

When you're in your nice warm house, they may spend hours standing out in the rain and snow handling an accident -- or waiting with a family who just lost a loved one -- or helping a stranded motorist -- or looking for Boys' School escapees -- or helping someone get their livestock off the highway -- or finding a place for a woman and her children because her husband beat her up and threw her out of the house -- or finding a place for a child who can't go back into an abusive home -- or taking a report on a break in somewhere -- or sitting out in the cold and dark on a tip of an impending crime.

Their lives are on the line every day -- they're spit at, assaulted, and called every foul name in the book, threatened with their jobs and expected to take it all.

The people who aren't involved in these things don't seem to understand that they do happen. I've heard over and over again, "we don't need police in Springer -- nothing ever happens here." **That's wrong!** Can you imagine how much more would happen if we had no laws or worse yet, a police department that did nothing? And you, the average law abiding citizen, can't begin to know the half of it.

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