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LAX Police Upgraded to Full Peace Officer Status Under New Law Signed by Governor

The police department that serves Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) will get a status upgrade thanks to a bill by Assembly Member Steven Bradford (D-Gardena).

AB 128, signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown today, changes airport police officers' status under state law to be equivalent to other municipal departments, like the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), a change recommended by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) and worked toward by the airport officers for a decade.

"Assembly Member Bradford's leadership in ensuring the highest standard of training and service of our police officers is reflective of his longstanding commitment to public safety," Marshall McClain, president of the Airport Peace Officers Association, said. "The passage of this legislation will serve as a permanent legacy to Assembly Member Bradford's support for law enforcement. The Los Angeles Airport Police and the surrounding aviation communities are greatly appreciative for his fulfilling this 10 year old recommendation from POST."

Under current law, airport officers fall under penal code section 830.33(d), which means they lack the legal authority to remove vehicles, seize weapons or drugs, or carry out other routine tasks necessary to the safe operation of a major airport. In those instances the airport officers may have to call LAPD for assistance. AB 128 reclassifies them under section 830.1, the same as any other municipal department.

"The Governor's signature on this important piece of legislation will now provide Los Angeles Airport Police Officers with the tools necessary to keep our airports safe and secure," Patrick Gannon, Chief of the airport police officers, said. "The traveling public and the residents of Los Angeles deserve no less. We appreciate Assembly Member Steven Bradford and all the efforts he has made to guide this bill through the State Legislature."

In previous legislative sessions this status change fell victim to politics. This year, however, the bill was supported by a coalition of local officials, including the chiefs of both the LAXPD and LAPD, as well as Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and incoming Mayor Eric Garcetti.

“It is important that the law enforcement agency responsible for protecting one of the world’s busiest airports—and one of the nation’s top terrorist targets—be afforded comprehensive police powers in the State of California,” Mayor Eric Garcetti said. “I’m pleased that Los Angeles International Airport will no longer be the only major airport in California that is policed by an agency whose officers do not have 830.1 status.”

Airport police officers currently receive the same training—and often train alongside—LAPD officers, but current law prevents them from performing the same duties. And as airport police officers are paid from airport revenues, this status change will not affect taxpayers.

“I thank all of the people who supported making our airport safer,” Bradford said. “Chief Gannon, Chief Beck, and Mayor Garcetti all lent their support to this commonsense measure because they understand that LAX is one of our nation’s top terrorist targets, and we must give our officers every legal tool to keep it safe.”

Assembly Member Steven Bradford represents the 62nd Assembly District, comprised of the cities of Hawthorne, Lawndale, Inglewood, and El Segundo, and the communities of North Gardena, Westchester, Venice, and Del Rey, and parts of Westmont and Park Mesa Heights.

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