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District Attorney Suzanne Valdez's Statement on Recent Lawrence Kansas Police Department Public Communications

LAWRENCE – The Douglas County District Attorney's Office is aware that members of the Lawrence Kansas Police Department's communications team have been posting videos obtained during pending investigations across social media or sharing these investigative videos with other forms of media outlets. These video clips are often edited such that they are not representative of the entire incident for which individuals may or may not be criminally charged by the Douglas County District Attorney's Office.

Though this office strongly favors accountability and transparency, we must not lose sight of the importance of preserving the integrity of ongoing investigations. We must not lose sight of the fundamental rights of those accused of criminal conduct. By law, despite what may be circulating across social media or in the press, the individuals depicted in those recordings remain innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law; not a court of public opinion.

With respect to the commentary accompanying these Lawrence Kansas Police Department social media posts, this office denounces references to those depicted in the video clips as "criminals." Again, the individuals depicted in those recordings have not been convicted. In most instances, they have not even been criminally charged prior to the Lawrence Kansas Police Department making its social media posts. To be clear, the District Attorney's Office, not law enforcement, decides what charges are appropriate to file under existing Kansas law.

The District Attorney's Office has a great deal of respect for all of our law enforcement partners, specifically those who competently and selflessly patrol our community to uphold safety. It is through cooperation with our law enforcement agencies that our Douglas County community remains safe. However, in cases investigated by law enforcement for prosecution by the District Attorney's Office, we must avoid any possibility of compromising the administration of justice. The Douglas County District Attorney's Office's is committed to ensuring due process and equal access to justice for all.

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