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County Charter Section 504: Misleading the Public and Strategically Side-Stepping Voter Intent

El Dorado County Taxpayers Association
Lee Tannenbaum, President
RE: Response to 2025 Section 504 Fact Sheet

**To the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors and County Residents,**

The El Dorado County Taxpayers Association respectfully submits the following response to the County’s recently posted “Section 504 Fact Sheet (2025)”, available at:
https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/files/assets/county/v/1/documents/government/bos/charter-section-504-fact-sheet-2025.pdf.

This document was also handed to the Board on Tuesday, April 8th as a non-agendized item. There is currently nothing in the meeting minutes, nor was this made public other than through a Facebook post in response to the TPA bringing this matter to the public. On the Facebook post, when this anonymous person was challenged by the TPA, this anonymous County Facebook poster stated, “It is factual and complete”. Well, it isn’t.

While this document may be technically accurate in isolated phrases, it is deeply misleading, incomplete, and framed to obscure the truth of how Section 504 is being used today. The County’s summary does not tell the full story—because if it did, the public would and should be outraged.

**The Original Intent of Section 504**

Voters approved Section 504 in 1995 with a narrow, honorable purpose: to ensure that entry-level Deputy Sheriff I and II positions would receive competitive salaries compared to similar sworn roles in neighboring counties. The goal was recruitment and retention—not executive enrichment.

That original intent is clear from the Charter itself: it references Deputy Sheriff I/II, not sergeants, lieutenants, captains, attorneys, analysts, administrators, or elected officials.

**A Quiet Expansion Hidden from the Public**

Over the years, the County quietly expanded the reach of Section 504 far beyond what voters ever approved.

Hundreds of positions—many completely non-sworn, administrative, or managerial—are now linked to 504 increases. These include:

- County Counsel
- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- District Attorney and Public Defender (including Alternate)
- Chief Probation Officer

- many more – see below.

All of these are now tied to 504 either directly or indirectly via MOUs and internal alignment policies.

**What the Fact Sheet Does Not Tell You**

**Why 'Compaction' Is a Poor Justification for Expanding 504**

One rationale offered by staff and some Board members for expanding Section 504-linked pay is the issue of “compaction”—a situation where subordinates are earning as much or more than their supervisors. While this may appear problematic at face value, using compaction as a blanket justification for widespread salary escalation is fiscally irresponsible.

Compaction is not inherently caused by Charter Section 504. It is the result of discretionary decisions made by County leadership to tie managerial and executive pay to classifications that are automatically adjusted via 504. Instead of reassessing the merit of those linkages, the County has chosen to expand them further, exacerbating the problem it claims to solve.

Moreover, compaction is not unique to El Dorado County or public safety roles. It exists across government and private industry, and it is typically managed through strategic budgeting, restructuring, and individual position evaluation—not across-the-board raises.

Automatically hiking salaries for managers, attorneys, and non-sworn administrators under the guise of avoiding compaction is a self-fulfilling and budget-busting policy. It fuels an upward spiral of compensation with no clear ceiling and no voter consent. Section 504 was never intended to justify this.

True leadership means saying no to automatic raises when they are not justified by public need or budget capacity. The solution to compaction is governance—not automatic escalation.

The County’s “Fact Sheet” fails to mention:

- The number of employees impacted: As of now, approximately 488 positions receive raises either directly from 504 or because they are discretionarily linked to 504. Only 135 are Deputy Sheriff I/II—the rest are higher-ranking law enforcement or entirely non-sworn roles.
- The annual cost: In 2025, the cost of 504-based increases across departments has already exceeded $2.8 million, during a time when the County is facing an approximately $20 million budget deficit.
- The deliberate linkages: Raises for department heads and non-sworn staff are not incidental—they are built into internal policies and MOU’s the County created.
- The use of consent calendar votes: Major salary increases have been buried in consent agenda items (including Items 7 and 8 on April 1, 2025), minimizing public scrutiny.

**Entire Non-Sworn Management Categories Omitted from Fact Sheet**

The County’s 2025 Fact Sheet makes no mention whatsoever of numerous non-sworn, administrative, and support classifications that are now directly benefiting from Section 504-linked salary adjustments.

Omitted categories include:

- District Attorney Investigators
- Public Defender Senior Investigators
- County Attorneys
- Administrative Analysts and Managers

- IT Supervisors and Senior Technologists
- Public Information Officers

- Budget and Fiscal Managers

- Facility and Fleet Managers
- Executive Assistants and Administrative Coordinators

- Parole and Correctional Officers – Senior Management Only

These roles are not sworn peace officers, nor are they named in the Charter. Yet, they are now explicitly linked to Section 504 via County policy, MOU language, or department head alignment.

1. District Attorney Investigators - MOU Language: “Shall receive compensation equivalent to comparable classifications in the Sheriff’s Office.”

2. Public Defender Senior Investigators - MOU Language: “Shall be compensated no less than equivalent EDSO investigative classifications.”

3. County Attorneys - MOU Language: “Shall be compensated at a level consistent with legal professionals performing comparable duties in law enforcement environments.”

4. Administrative Analysts and Managers - MOU Language: “Salary range shall maintain parity with internal classifications impacted by Section 504, such as DA Investigators and Sheriff Analysts.”

5. IT Supervisors and Senior Technologists - Policy Reference: “Shall be adjusted to maintain consistency with similarly classified roles in departments with law enforcement functions.”

6. Public Information Officers - Administrative Policy: “Shall maintain a salary range in parity with Administrative Analyst III, which is tied to law enforcement benchmarks.”

7. Budget and Fiscal Managers - Compensation Structure: “Compensation shall be set at a level that reflects operational oversight of departments with 504-impacted classifications.”

8. Facilities and Fleet Managers - Policy Language: “Pay structure shall align with administrative operations managers receiving adjustments via law enforcement comparison groups.”

9. Executive Assistants / Admin Coordinators - Administrative Memo: “Position is tied to department head compensation; any movement in department head salary shall trigger a proportional review.”

10. Parole and Correctional Officers – Senior Management Only - MOU Language: “Correctional Captain and Chief Probation Officer salaries shall be set at levels commensurate with EDSO Command classifications.”

Note: Front-line correctional officers are not explicitly tied to Section 504.

Discrepancy Summary:

The Fact Sheet presents Section 504 as narrowly applied to public safety and a few related command and senior administrative positions. Yet these additional classifications are:

- Written directly into internal policy as 504-adjacent
- Benefiting from raises explicitly tied to departments receiving Section 504 increases
- Receiving automatic adjustments through indirect salary alignment

Legistar Evidence:
- April 2025 Consent Calendar – Items #7 and #8: Authorizes reclassifications and raises for these administrative classifications, citing equity with law enforcement comparators.
- File #24-2111: Outlines justification language and staff reports showing non-sworn roles linked to 504-based pay structures.

**The Fact Sheet is a PR Document, Not a Transparency Tool**

The timing of the Fact Sheet’s release—just after a wave of public scrutiny—speaks volumes. It was not published as proactive public education. It was published as damage control.

It does not address the core concerns:
- Why are non-deputies receiving 504 raises?
- Why were these raises never disclosed to voters?
- Why is the County still expanding 504 classifications under the radar?

**A Final Note to the Public**

If you read the Fact Sheet, ask yourself: what is missing and why are so many non-law enforcement classifications on the sheet? It paints a picture of what was intended to be a straightforward policy supporting law enforcement. But buried underneath that framing is a complex system of internal linkages, reclassifications, and salary escalations that now apply to a wide swath of El Dorado County’s highest-paid administrators.

This is not what voters approved. It’s a misuse of public trust and a manipulation of Charter language to justify unjustified raises.

The El Dorado County Taxpayers Association calls on the Board of Supervisors to:

1. Acknowledge the true scope and cost of 504 expansions.

2. Immediately publish a complete list of classifications tied to 504—directly or indirectly.

3. Freeze any further expansions pending public review and clarification.

4. DO NOT allow this process to continue in December 2025 for 2026

5. Begin a public process to restore Section 504 to its original purpose: competitive pay for frontline deputies.

6. It has come to light the office of the CAO has been aware of the now ~$20M budget deficit for over a year, why would they suggest giving raises to these attachments, knowing that public services will be cut to meet the budget.

Taxpayers are watching. And we will not accept spin in place of transparency.

Sincerely,

Lee Tannenbaum
President, El Dorado County Taxpayers Association

**References**

1. FY 2022-23 Charter Review Committee Final Report. Discusses the original purpose of Section 504 and flags the need to revisit comparator agencies and application scope. https://eldorado.legistar.com/View.ashx?GUID=BC9643AF-6113-44BA-8E63-D808FDFA62AF&ID=12238478&M=F

2. Board of Supervisors Agenda – January 8, 2008 (Item 26). Budget transfer of $404,594 for Charter Measure 504 salary increases affecting the District Attorney and Sheriff. https://eldorado.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?GUID=6BE0C174-8C15-4EF3-9313-F4C32E29D8F9&ID=533625

3. Board of Supervisors Resolution 229-2024. Provides salary cost impacts across departments due to 504 raises, including non-sworn departments. https://eldorado.legistar.com

4. Legistar Staff Report – File 24-2111. Supports April 2025 reclassifications; outlines new classifications linked via policy to 504 parity increases. https://eldorado.legistar.com

5. Board of Supervisors Consent Calendar – April 1, 2025 (Items 7 & . Approved salary adjustments and reclassifications affecting a broad set of roles, including attorneys, IT, and fiscal managers — justified using 504 comparisons.
https://eldorado.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7037766&GUID=C83AB19C-5603-4379-8FC3-CEA5F8BE8B5B

6. 1. FY 2022-23 Charter Review Committee Final Report. https://eldorado.legistar.com/View.ashx?GUID=BC9643AF-6113-44BA-8E63-D808FDFA62AF&ID=12238478&M=F

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