

For Immediate Release:

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**Attorney General Balderas Announces Police Use of Force Review,
Calls on Legislature to Immediately Institute Body-worn Camera Law
and Chokehold Ban**

Santa Fe, NM---Attorney General Hector Balderas today announced that the Office of the Attorney General is currently investigating the death of Rodney Lynch for possible illegal use of force by members of the Gallup Police Department. Attorney General Balderas also called on the Legislature to create uniform use of force policies in law:

“Increased transparency and accountability protects the community, as well as law enforcement,” said Attorney General Balderas. “I am asking that the Legislature immediately create uniform use of force policies that ban deadly tactics and ensure both officer and community safety statewide.”

The Office of the Attorney General is recommending that the Legislature undertake systemic reform, but as they address much needed structural changes, Attorney General Balderas urges the Legislature to immediately institute reforms that increase law enforcement transparency and accountability. These reforms should include a requirement that law enforcement officers in the State wear body cameras when on duty, and that they should be prohibited from using chokeholds when engaging in any arrest.

The call for increased transparency in law enforcement interactions with the public is in keeping with Attorney General Balderas’ work as member of the New Mexico House of Representatives, where he passed legislation requiring the recording of police custodial interrogations. That reform, as with this recommendation, ensured that law enforcement officials can be held accountable for their actions during any interaction with the public.

In 2016, Attorney General Balderas ordered the Law Enforcement Academy Board (LEAB) to undertake a statewide review of use of force policies in every law enforcement agency in the State. While the Board does not govern department policies, the review was undertaken to begin to identify gaps in department policies and to build recommendations for best practices to be used by those agencies. Ultimately, the review exposed a patchwork of policies across the State, with some agencies not reporting any policy on file. In addition, Third Judicial District Attorney Mark D’Antonio has asked Attorney General Balderas to advocate for uniform, statewide use of force policies, including banning the use of chokehold restraint techniques.

The LEAB review and the District Attorney’s request make clear that we cannot rely on individual agencies to enact these policies, and so the Legislature must codify them in law to ensure that they are robust and uniform.

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