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City Leaders' Exemption From False-Alarm Fines Is Targeted

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A Los Angeles City Council committee recommended Monday eliminating one of the perks of public office, saying elected officials ought to be fined like everyone else in Los Angeles when police respond to false burglar alarms at their homes.

The discussion came after months of debate about how the Los Angeles Police Department should respond to burglar alarms in a city where more than 97% turn out to be false.

Last year, Police Chief William J. Bratton proposed that the department not answer alarms unless a resident or the alarm company could verify the legitimacy of the call.

Many community groups and burglar alarm companies reacted with outrage. As a result, police officials and council members compromised.

They agreed that officers would demand verification of a call after two false alarms at a single address.

And the council is expected to vote soon on whether to increase the fines for false alarms at homes and businesses to \$115 for the first false alarm and \$165 for the second.

A draft of the policy considered Monday by the council's Public Safety Committee would exempt any elected official who has a free city-installed alarm in his or her home. City and school buildings, state and federal offices and diplomats also receive so-called exempt alarm permits, meaning police respond immediately and do not bill for false alarms.

Led by Councilman Dennis Zine, however, committee members said that when it comes to paying fines, they should get the same treatment as their constituents.

"I think we shouldn't treat elected officials differently," Councilwoman Janice Hahn said.

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