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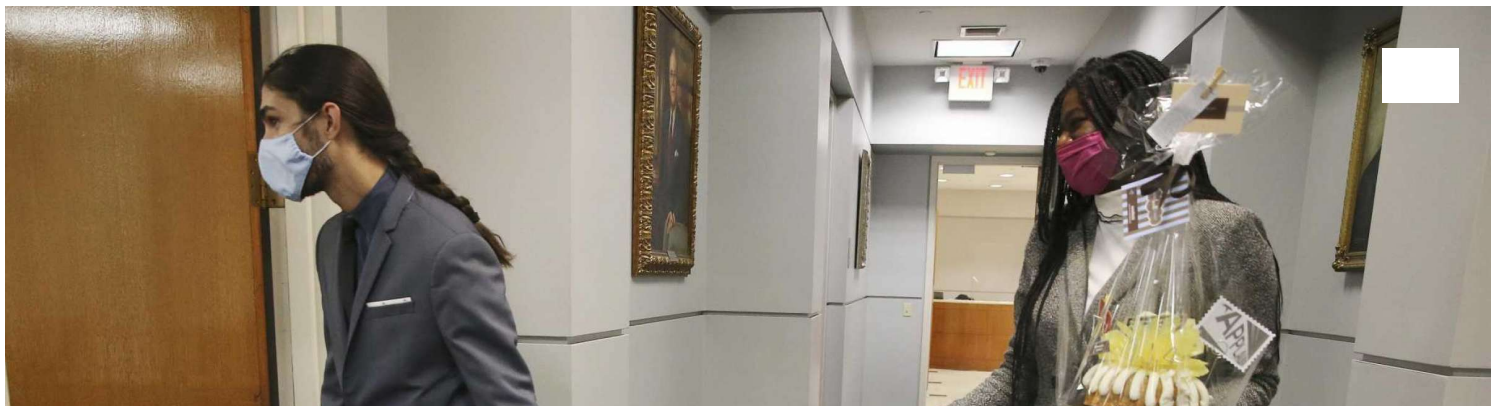
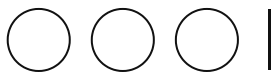
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San Antonio voters to decide in May on police reform measure after Fix SAPD petition drive gets enough valid signatures



Joshua Fechter, Staff writer

Updated: Feb. 4, 2021 7:56 p.m.





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Co-founder Oji Martin (right) and Board member James Dykman of Fix SAPD bring boxes of 20,000 collected signatures for the city clerk to certify in hopes of putting the repeal of Chapter 174 on the May ballot on Friday, Jan. 8, 2021. The volunteer organization wants Chapters 174 and 143 which deal with collective bargaining and discipline procedures within the San Antonio Police Department - both of which FixSAPD want to repeal. Friday's presentation of 20,000 signatures was for the repeal of Chapter 174.

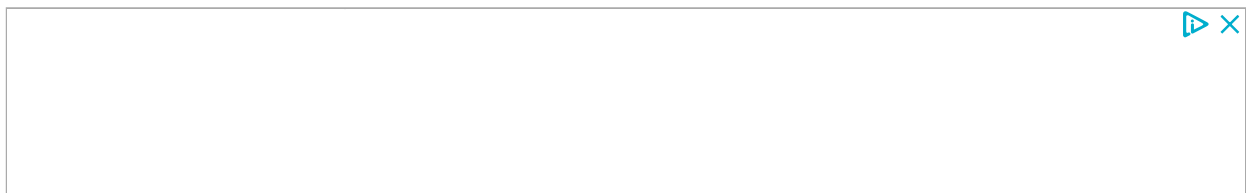
Kin Man Hui /Staff photographer

The stage is set for an all-out battle between police reform activists and the San Antonio Police Officers Association after the city on Thursday certified the activists gathered enough eligible signatures to put a measure on the May ballot that would strip police officers of their collective bargaining rights.

San Antonio voters will have to decide whether the measure is needed to make it more difficult for the police union to shield officers accused of misconduct as Fix SAPD says, or whether it should be rejected as a back-door method to defund the police department, as union leaders say.

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Last month, Fix SAPD’s organizers turned in more than 20,000 signatures from people seeking to put the matter in voter hands. Thursday, the city clerk’s office said there were enough valid signatures to do it.

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Fix SAPD leaders lauded the announcement as a “first step toward stronger police accountability in our community.”

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“This is a major accomplishment for all our volunteers, and the tens of thousands of San Antonians who demanded change,” Fix SAPD board member EJ Pinnock said. “Now we, as a city, have a chance to send a clear message: Accountability is non-negotiable.”

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But backers of the union have warned that stripping away collective bargaining would give the city less flexibility in hiring, promotions and boosting of diversity in the ranks — and deprive the city of an avenue to pursue reforms.

Union leaders on Thursday tried to turn attention to the source of Fix SAPD’s fundraising. Of the reform campaign’s \$300,000 fundraising haul, Fix SAPD received \$250,000 from the Texas Organizing Project Education Fund, an arm of the Texas Organizing Project, a progressive grassroots group that specializes in community and election organizing.



Emily Brieno is among those protesting in memory of George Floyd in downtown in San Antonio, Texas, on May 30, 2020. Floyd died in the custody of Minneapolis police and his death has sparked protests across the country.

Josie Norris /Staff Photographer

TOP's education fund doesn't have to make its donors known to the public because it's organized as a 501(c)(3) public charity, which aren't required to provide that

information.

Episode Title	Duration	Date
Episode 111: Extremists in the military	00:19:50	Feb 3, 2021
Episode 110: Developers allowed to skirt tree ordinance	00:15:24	Jan 22, 2021
Episode 109: 52 Weeks of Pizza	00:12:40	Dec 29, 2020
Episode 108: San Antonio Stories	00:17:48	Dec 29, 2020
Episode 107: Fallout from Edingburg high school football player assaulting referee	00:14:53	Dec 21, 2020
Episode 106: 'History in the making:' COVID-19 vaccinations begin		

“SAPOA plans on working hard between now and election day to inform voters about how important collective bargaining ... is to recruiting top-notch police officers who will keep our neighborhoods safe and to ensuring the police chief and the city continue to have flexibility in hiring, promotions, discipline and boosting diversity within the department,” said Danny Diaz, the union’s president.

The fight over whether the police union will be able to bargain collectively over wages and working conditions will undoubtedly spill over into races for mayor and City Council.

It also comes as negotiators for the city and police union are set to begin hammering out a new contract this month. Officials have said it's possible the two parties could settle on contract terms before the May vote.

Fix SAPD had sought to gather enough signatures to put two measures on a citywide ballot: one to address collective bargaining, the other to challenge firings and disciplinary action before arbitrators. The idea behind both measures is to take away the union's ability to influence how officers are disciplined.

The organization was able to gather enough signatures to get collective bargaining on the ballot, but not for the other measure.

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Upon graduating from Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin in 2014, Joshua joined the Express-News in 2014 as a breaking news reporter for mySA.com.

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Local



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A North East Independent School District police officer was killed Thursday in a rollover crash, police said.

BY MARK DUNPHY

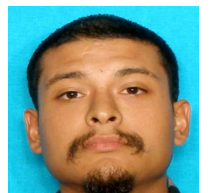
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