

## Police fail to appear for talk on choke hold

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Author: JIM OKERBLOM

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### Document Text

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San Diego police officials were asked by the city's civilian review board to talk about the carotid restraint -- the controversial choke hold that killed 16-year-old John Hampton last month -- but they declined to show up.

The Citizens' Review Board on Police Practices had scheduled a presentation on the carotid hold by Capt. Dan Berglund for the public portion of its meeting last night.

However, police officials said they "questioned the appropriateness" of any presentation on the hold right now and suggested that if one is conducted it be done only in a closed session.

The board, however, voted 13-1 to ask City Manager Jack McGrory and Police Chief Bob Burgreen for a public presentation on the hold.

Hampton died Jan. 17 after an officer-trainee subdued him with the neck hold, which is intended to make a person pass out. Police said the hold was applied after Hampton became violent. Three investigations are under way.

Despite the absence of police officials, Hampton's death and the hold dominated the review panel's discussion last night.

Several board members were critical of a letter written by their chairman, Arthur Ellis, who is a professor of social work at San Diego State University. The letter criticized police use of the hold and demanded an end to the "inexplicable deaths of unarmed people" at the hands of groups of law-enforcement officers.

Ellis' letter was published in the Los Angeles Times earlier this month.

Board member Carol Hallstrom said Ellis "had compromised the integrity of his board" because his letter appeared to state the views of the entire panel without its permission on a case it had not yet reviewed. She suggested that Ellis should perhaps be removed as chairman or barred from hearing cases involving the deaths of suspects.

After discussion, the board sent the matter to a rules committee for further investigation.

"If I were a San Diego police officer, I would be outraged by this letter," said board member Paul Pfingst, a lawyer.

Other board members supported Ellis, however, saying he was only expressing his personal opinion about an issue of great community concern.

"I personally applaud that letter," said Michael Crowley, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney who is not on the

panel.

Crowley argued that the only real power the board has is to bring issues to the public's attention while they are still timely.

Credit: Staff Writer

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<b>Abstract</b> (Document Summary)
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