

# San Antonio Express-News

## Bully tactics hurt union's credibility

By Express-News Editorial Board

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It's hard to see just whom the city's police union thinks it will win over with its personal attacks against City Manager Sheryl Sculley. Instead of winning supporters in its contract dispute, it's far more likely the negativity will push more people away.

Not only has Mike Helle, president of the San Antonio Police Officers Association, called for Sculley to be fired, but the union is also paying for print, online, radio and TV ads to attack her character, Express-News metro columnist Brian Chasnoff reported.

By making it so personal, Helle has signaled to the public that the fight is more important than reaching a deal on public safety health benefits. Taking talks into the gutter reeks of desperation. If you can't win on the issues, attack your opponent's character.

And the city's public safety unions have not been winning on the issues. They have dangerous and stressful jobs that are vital to our community, but they have managed to paint themselves as bullies at every PR turn. Whether it's attacking Sculley, who has been an excellent city manager, attempting to use the Ebola crisis for their own leverage, badgering council members at meetings, or criticizing nonpublic safety spending as wasteful, the police and fire unions simply can't get out of their own way.

Such aggressive tactics hardly generate public sympathy, especially when public safety benefits far exceed those in the private sector. Police and firefighters are incredibly well-compensated, particularly when overtime is factored in.

Taxpayers pay for a public safety legal fund that police and firefighters tap for personal issues such as divorces, child support and even DWI defenses. They receive education bonuses even when they don't complete degrees. And, of course, they receive health care with no monthly premiums for themselves or their families. That's rich by any measure.

Public safety expenses consume two-thirds of the city's general fund. Asking public safety workers to take a modest cut in health care benefits to help control costs isn't a personal attack. It's simply recognizing spending limits.

It's past time to drop these childish, personal attacks and reach a deal.