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NEW and disturbing information in the Rampart police corruption case raises even more troubling questions on the role the **District Attorney's** Office played in one of the most serious scandals in L.A.'s history.

The Daily News reported Sunday that a **deputy district attorney** on two occasions tried to warn superiors that Officer Rafael Perez, now the central figure in the massive LAPD corruption scandal, couldn't be trusted.

These weren't personality conflicts between a prosecutor and a policeman. **Deputy District Attorney Michael Kraut** so mistrusted the testimony of Perez he had to ask a judge to dismiss charges against a defendant, and then a few weeks later he came across another case that a prosecutor also had to drop because of Perez's dishonesty.

Kraut's memos to superiors apparently were ignored. But it didn't stop there. We learned he was personally rebuked by his superiors for sounding an alarm - an alarm that never made it to the LAPD.

The prosecutor's warnings came six months before Perez stole nearly \$1 million worth of cocaine from an LAPD evidence room, triggering what would become the largest police corruption probe in city history.

The Rampart scandal isn't just about crooked cops. The entire criminal justice system is on trial.

District Attorney Gil Garcetti repeatedly has refused to accept any responsibility for the fact that as many as several hundred people were falsely convicted and has arrogantly asserted that the failure of prosecutors, public defenders, judges and cops is solely LAPD's ``mess."

He refuses to release the Kraut memo detailing the prosecutor's reasons for dropping the first case, and he refuses to discuss why his department failed to notify police that they might have a crooked cop on their hands.

Apparently Garcetti believes that everything his office does is privileged and protected from public scrutiny - a mind-boggling position.

Last week, Head **Deputy District Attorney** Sally Thomas, who oversees a belated review of the two cases, said she has found nothing yet to indicate Perez would have been nabbed earlier if the warnings were handled differently.

That is a patently ridiculous assertion.

A **deputy district attorney** raises a red flag not once, but twice, about the veracity of a police officer, and no one is alarmed there was no follow-up and nothing would have happened?

For all of these reasons, it is clear that the U.S. Justice Department is the only entity that can conduct a thorough and comprehensive investigation of the LAPD and the **District Attorney's** Office and other elements of the criminal justice system.

But that still isn't enough to begin the process of restoring public confidence.

There also is a responsibility that local leaders - so quick to condemn Police Chief Bernard Parks' elaborate criminal and systemic investigations and so slow to question Garcetti's handling of the scandal - must fulfill.

Supervisor Michael Antonovich and City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas are the only two officials beginning to challenge how both the city and county could fail so miserably.

"The entire criminal justice system in Los Angeles County is on trial here. Mr. Garcetti has a clear role to play in putting the public at ease and causing us to have a sense of confidence in the justice system," Ridley-Thomas said.

Antonovich tried to get his colleagues to order Garcetti to give a full accounting in public about how his office is being run, and the rest of the supervisors ran for cover.

It's time for them to step forward and earn their pay. County supervisors have ultimate responsibility for the **District Attorney's** Office, public defenders and the judges.

At the least they should order internal investigations of each agency and then hold public hearings on their findings, just as the LAPD and Police Commission have done.

At this point, every element of the criminal justice system is under suspicion for being actively or passively involved in civil rights violations on a mass scale.

This is too big to be swept under the rug or hidden in the closet with all the other skeletons of Los Angeles' long tradition of political corruption.