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NEWS

# Another Family of An LA County Sheriff's Deputy Plans To File Wrongful Death Lawsuit Over Forced Overtime

By [Makenna Sievertson](#)

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A photo of Deputy Arturo Atilano-Valdez provided by the family's attorney, Brad Gage.

(Courtesy of Brad Gage and the Atilano family. )

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The family of L.A. County Sheriff’s Deputy Arturo Atilano-Valdez, who has now been identified as the fourth LASD employee to die by suicide in a 24 hour period, are expected to file a \$20 million wrongful death lawsuit against the department and L.A. County.

His wife, Michele Atilano, and their two young daughters filed a government claim on Thursday, which is required before suing a government agency. The family is accusing the LASD and the county of forcing mandatory overtime that they say contributed to Deputy Atilano-Valadez’s death.

Brad Gage, the attorney representing the Atilano family, is also representing Deputy Ryan Clinkunbroomer’s family in their similar wrongful death claim.

“This is literally a life and death situation,” Gage said at a news conference Friday. “Deputies are being forced to work overtime in an amount that is unsafe – unsafe to them and unsafe to others.”

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According to Gage, Deputy Atilano-Valadez was working regular double shifts, which meant he was getting home around 11 p.m. each night and waking up for work at 4 a.m. the next morning.

That took a “terrible toll” on him, Gage said, and Deputy Atilano-Valadez looked for relief from the LASD.

He had asked for different assignments and hours, but those requests were denied. Deputy Atilano-Valadez became despondent and depressed and asked the LASD for medical accommodations, but those were also denied, Gage added.

Michele Atilano said her husband was a “walking zombie” and had complained about feeling like “just another number” to the LASD. She said Deputy Atilano-Valadez also talked about seeing his friends in the department die, including Deputy Clinkunbroomer.

On Nov. 7, Michele Atilano and their daughters found Deputy Atilano-Valadez injured from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in their home. He died later that day in a hospital in Pomona, just weeks before his 50th birthday, medical examiner records show.

“What has happened in my family is going to continue happening to many other deputies being forced to work,” she said.

According to Gage, Sheriff Robert Luna and the L.A. County Board of Supervisors have known about the problems with staffing levels and forced overtime for years, but haven’t taken any action.

Gage also told LAist the Atilano family is planning on filing a government claim with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing, which is the precursor to a discrimination lawsuit.

They believe Deputy Atilano-Valadez was passed over for promotion and his requests for assistance were denied because he was a 40+ year old Latino man with disabilities.

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L.A. County and the LASD will have 45 days to respond to each claim. If they are denied or ignored, Gage said they will be filing a lawsuit.

That lawsuit will be seeking damages for Michele Atilano and their daughters, but Gage said they're also looking for change.

"We are here hoping that the Sheriff's Department will make real reforms," he said.

The LASD has received LAist's request for comment, but we have not heard back.

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