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FROM PRODUCER OF 'COPS,' P.D. T.V.

**By Greg Katz**

Daily Journal Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES - For now, call it "America's Next Top Public Defender."

Langley Productions Inc. - the people who brought you COPS - is prepping a reality show about the lives of deputies in the Los Angeles County public defender's office.

County supervisors voted Tuesday to OK filming.

The show, as yet unnamed, will show audiences a part of the justice system they rarely see on television, said Public Defender Michael Judge.

"This is going to be different, both in terms of how it's done and the perspective it will supply," Judge said. "The missing element all these shows have neglected to share with audiences is the viewpoint, the world and the context of public defenders operating in the criminal justice system."

The show will follow public defenders' cases as well as their social and private lives, showing the delicate balance between their caseloads and personal responsibilities, Judge said.

And if there's a stereotype of public defenders as something less than telegenic, the show will prove otherwise, said producer John Langley.

"Au contraire! The public defender's office has perhaps more diversity than any other government office in the state of California," Langley said. "They have a plethora of interesting people and characters and defenders. Our job is to show the public that variety, that dedicated, hardworking group of lawyers."

First, however, Judge has to supply a list of deputies who will make for good TV. He would not say which members of his staff he will tap for stardom.

To sweeten the deal for Judge, Langley will pay his office 10 percent of his profits from the show, plus \$3,000 or two percent of the license fee, whichever is greater. Langley will also pay up to \$500 in legal fees per episode so that county counsel can check on any potential legal problems, according to the contract approved by county supervisors.

It might prove a good deal for an office coping with the fallout of the state's budget troubles - as long as the show gets picked up. No network or debut date has been set yet.

In fact, even the name is still up in the air. (Judge suggests the precise, if bland, "The Los Angeles County Public Defender's Office.")

Judge said he's been approached many times over the years with similar concepts, but Langley is the first to acquiesce to stringent privacy requirements.

To protect client privacy, the production company has agreed to get permission from everyone whose name or image will appear in each frame, according to the contract.

It's not the first time someone saw the potential for good TV in the world of indigent defense.

That honor likely goes to "The Public Defender," a half-hour drama that aired from 1953 to 1954 starring Reed Hadley. The show honored a real-life public defender in each episode.

Last year, TNT debuted "Raising the Bar," a dramatic series in which the main character, played by Mark-Paul Gosselaar, is a public defender.

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