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Former deputy with Bayfield Marshal's Office decertified for dishonesty

Eight officers statewide will no longer serve in Colorado

By Shannon Mullane Herald Staff Writer

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A former deputy with the Bayfield Marshal's Office had his police certification revoked last week for misconduct during an internal administrative process earlier this year.

Durango Herald file



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The Colorado Peace Officer Standards and Training board revoked the certifications of six officers, including Christopher Tonge of Bayfield, for either lying or omitting facts. Two more officers were decertified for federal or misdemeanor charges, including a Durango Police Department officer.

“Public trust is achieved when law enforcement officers act with honesty and accountability,” said Attorney General Phil Weiser in a news release. “While the vast majority of peace officers honor this trust each and every day they put on their badge, unfortunately, there are some officers that do not belong in this profession.”

This is the first time officer certifications have been revoked for untruthfulness since 2019 legislative changes in Senate Bill 19-166.

Under those changes, the board can suspend or revoke an officer’s certification if a law enforcement agency has found the officer knowingly made an untruthful statement while under oath or during an internal investigation.

The revocation applies statewide: The decertified officers will no longer work in Colorado law enforcement.

Before the changes, agencies could fire officers for lying but those officers could still move on to a different agency, and the POST board could revoke officers’ certifications only for criminal conduct.

“It is essential that we hold these persons accountable and ensure they will no longer serve in Colorado as certified peace officers,” Weiser said.

In early January, the Bayfield Marshal’s Office heard a complaint about Tonge and a personal matter that could have been criminal, said Chief Joe McIntyre.

The incident, which was off-duty and not duty-related, prompted an internal investigation. The investigation did not find any evidence to support criminal charges; however, it did reveal that Tonge was untruthful while answering questions during the initial investigation.

The Marshal’s Office began the termination process, but Tonge resigned before it was complete, McIntyre said. As required, the Bayfield Marshal’s Office notified the POST board of Tonge’s misconduct.

Former Durango Police Department officer **Justin Moore was decertified** because of misdemeanor charges from a domestic violence incident in 2019.

The revocation actions will be entered into the National Decertification Index and a state database, as mandated by Colorado’s sweeping police reform bill passed in June.

“Honesty, truthfulness and integrity is the cornerstone of our profession,” McIntyre said. “The Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police and all police chiefs in Colorado, including me, supported unanimously adding the ‘untruthfulness’ rule as it relates to decertifying a law enforcement officer in Colorado.”

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