



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2016

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS
Contact: Kara McCarthy (202) 307-1241

OCR Issues Report, Finds Alabama Agency Failed to Properly Recruit, Hire and Retain Female Troopers

WASHINGTON – The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) has issued a compliance review report finding that the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency’s (ALEA) Department of Public Safety (DPS) did not provide equal employment opportunities (EEO) to female trooper applicants and female troopers. On January 1, 2015, DPS became part of ALEA through an agency restructuring.

In the report, OCR finds that DPS discriminated against female applicants in its selection practices in violation of the nondiscrimination provision of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (Safe Streets Act) and its implementing regulations. The Act and its regulations state that a recipient cannot discriminate against applicants and employees based on sex and must develop an appropriate EEO program. The report also concludes that DPS has an inadequate program for recruiting female trooper applicants and that DPS and ALEA take insufficient steps to create a nondiscriminatory work environment for female troopers. A link to the report can be found at http://ojp.gov/about/ocr/pdfs/14-OCR-0444_01042016.pdf.

According to the report, since 2009, DPS hired 66 male troopers and one female trooper. Despite this hiring record, the report notes that DPS took little action to improve its efforts to recruit female trooper applicants. It also used a pre-offer physical agility and ability test that adversely impacted women. It is in this context that OCR evaluated the work environment for the seventeen sworn officers at DPS who were women.

The report also found that DPS did not consider whether female troopers could participate in career-enhancing training opportunities; that ALEA improved DPS’ EEO program but did not sufficiently counter a culture that tolerated the mistreatment of female troopers; and that ALEA and DPS do not dedicate enough resources to EEO efforts.

OCR is providing ALEA with the opportunity to engage in voluntary compliance negotiations to address the findings in its report. ALEA and DPS received financial assistance under the Safe Streets Act from OJP and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office).

“While OCR’s findings in this matter are serious and raise significant questions about the adequacy of Alabama’s efforts to recruit, hire, and retain female troopers, we will work with ALEA to address these findings,” said OJP Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason. “The

Department is committed to working with states and grantees to ensure recipients of financial assistance comply with federal laws that prohibit discrimination in both employment and the delivery of services or benefits based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, and disability.”

“OCR’s findings underscore concerns about the lack of diversity in many of our nation’s law enforcement agencies and the resulting recommendations of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing,” added COPS Office Director Ronald L. Davis. “By improving its efforts to recruit, hire, and retain female troopers, ALEA can improve the service it provides and strengthen its relationship with communities across Alabama.”

OCR conducted this review as part of its Women in Law Enforcement Compliance Review Initiative. This initiative evaluates whether state law enforcement agencies are complying with their nondiscrimination and EEO obligations under the Safe Streets Act and its regulations as to the recruitment, selection, and retention of female troopers. OCR is focusing its efforts on state-level law enforcement agencies because of their relatively low levels of female sworn officers.

In 2010, the Bureau of Justice Statistics published a report on the long-term trends of women as sworn officers. The study showed that from 1987 – 2007 state law enforcement agencies made the least amount of progress in hiring female sworn officers, compared to local law enforcement agencies. For instance, in Alabama, as of October 2014 women only held 17 (2.69 percent) out of 633 sworn officer positions at DPS. Through this initiative, OCR seeks to improve opportunities for women at state law enforcement agencies across the country. OCR’s Alabama report is the first issued under this initiative.

About the Office of Justice Programs (OJP)

OJP, headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation’s capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at www.ojp.gov.