

**Statement of  
The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
Hearing on  
“A Continuing Examination of Civil Rights Services and  
Diversity in the Coast Guard”  
June 19, 2009**

The Subcommittee convenes today to continue its examination of civil rights services in the Coast Guard and of the Coast Guard’s diversity initiatives. I note this hearing is being conducted as one of several hearings that meet the oversight requirements under clauses 2(n), (o), and (p) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

In April, I convened the Subcommittee to consider the Coast Guard’s provision of civil rights services to its military and civilian workforce and to applicants for employment following the release of a report on the service’s equal employment opportunity programs written by Booz Allen Hamilton.

The Booz Allen Hamilton report was simply scathing. Among other criticisms, the Booz Allen Hamilton team found that: the Coast Guard’s civil rights program did not fully protect confidential personal information; the service did not conduct thorough analyses of barriers to equal opportunity in employment or develop specific plans to break these barriers down; and the service had a number of inadequately trained service providers who could not ensure the complaints management process was in full compliance with regulatory requirements.

We also learned after subsequent examination that virtually none of these findings was new. Almost all of these criticisms had been identified – sometimes repeatedly – in previous third-party assessments of the Coast Guard civil rights program and in the Coast Guard’s own self-assessments.

During the course of our April hearing, the Coast Guard indicated that six new positions had been assigned to the Office of Civil Rights. The Director of the Office of Civil Rights, Ms. Terri Dickerson, stated she could have these positions filled by June 15, and I promised that the Subcommittee would reconvene after June 15 to receive an update on the progress made by the Coast Guard in filling these positions and in strengthening the provision of civil rights services. That promise is kept by the convening of today’s hearing.

During our last hearing, Ms. Dickerson also indicated that a number of plans were being developed and were poised for implementation to respond to the many shortcomings identified in the Coast Guard’s civil rights services. Initial reports indicate that significant progress has been made. I note that yesterday, the Coast Guard announced that civil rights service providers will now be full-time employees who will receive standardized training and who will report directly to the Office of Civil Rights. We applaud the long overdue professionalization of the Coast Guard’s civil rights services.

Finally, Ranking Member LoBiondo and I agreed that we would ask the Government Accountability Office to submit to the Subcommittee by next April the results of an assessment

of the Coast Guard's effort to strengthen the management of its Equal Employment Opportunity and Equal Opportunity programs.

I report today that Ranking Member LoBiondo and I – together with the Chairman of the full Committee, Congressman Oberstar, and the Ranking Member of the full Committee, Congressman Mica – have written to the GAO to request that study. Our staffs have met with representatives of the GAO and the GAO is formulating its research plan at the present time and intends to present findings to the Subcommittee next April as requested.

I say this to emphasize that our oversight of the Coast Guard's civil rights programs will in no way end today. Today's hearing is just another installment of what will continue to be an active oversight process. Our goal is ensuring that the Coast Guard achieves and sustains a model EEO program for civilian employees and a model EO program for members of the military.

During our April hearing, we also examined the initiatives that the Coast Guard is undertaking to expand diversity throughout its ranks. We have been particularly concerned about diversity at the Coast Guard Academy.

In May, the Coast Guard Academy's Class of 2009 graduated. Out of a class of 225 students, there were, according to data provided by the Coast Guard, 24 minorities, including 10 Asians, 9 Hispanics, 4 African Americans and one Native American. Additional data provided by the Coast Guard show that the incoming Class of 2013 is expected to begin with 288 students, of whom 44 will be minorities, meaning that minorities will comprise approximately 15 percent of the incoming class. Of those students, Hispanic Americans will comprise nearly nine percent of the incoming class and African Americans will comprise two percent of the incoming class.

I serve as a Member of the Board of Visitors of the Naval Academy. Earlier this month, the Naval Academy announced that its Class of 2013 will be the most diverse class in that institution's history, with 35 percent of the class of incoming midshipmen being minorities. In other words, the Naval Academy's Class of 2013 has more than double the number of incoming minority members as a percentage of the incoming class than the Coast Guard Academy's Class of 2013 does. Further, this level of diversity in the Naval Academy's Class of 2013 represents an increase of approximately seven percent over the percentage that minorities comprised of the incoming Class of 2012 last year.

The very top levels of the Navy's leadership in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations have recognized that diversity is not a problem to be managed but is rather a promise to be realized. Our nation's diversity is one of our greatest strengths. And, to ensure that it can harness this strength to accomplish its missions in service to our nation, the Navy has set a clear objective of significantly increasing the diversity of its future senior leadership – and it is holding its current senior leadership directly accountable for their contributions to the achievement of this objective.

In pursuit of the Navy's overall diversity objectives, the U.S. Naval Academy has implemented a comprehensive effort to break down any barriers that its old recruiting methods may have thrown in the way of the achievement of its inclusion goals and has initiated new efforts targeted to reach potential students in every corner of this nation. This effort has been

led by the Dean of Admissions at the Naval Academy, Stephen B. Latta, who will testify today. I emphasize that he is here specifically to share with the Subcommittee how the Naval Academy has achieved its stunning successes.

The experience of the U.S. Naval Academy demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that where there is a will to expand diversity, diversity will expand. The Coast Guard is moving decisively to ensure that its civil rights services guarantee equal opportunity to all. Like the Navy, the Coast Guard must also take specific and aggressive steps to ensure that it can harness the strength of our nation's diversity by ensuring that its leadership pipeline reflects that diversity.

It is frankly past time for the Coast Guard to move to define comprehensive, service-wide diversity objectives and to require each member and unit of the service – including the Academy – to contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

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