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NAWLEE Testimony  
President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing  
Submitted on January 9, 2015

***"Building Trust and Legitimacy"***

We appreciate this opportunity to share on behalf of our members, our views on this topic for consideration by the Task Force.

Our members represent federal, state, county, local, and university law enforcement agencies. The focus of the organization is on the issues effecting the profession at the chief executive level.

The National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE) is the first organization established to address the unique needs of women holding senior management positions in law enforcement. In our 20<sup>th</sup> year, the organization currently has over 500 members. Women make up approximately 12% of law enforcement officers across the United States and just fewer than 2% are Chiefs of Police or top administrators of their organizations.

Our general purpose is to promote the ideals and principles of women executives in law enforcement; to conduct seminars to train and educate women executives in law enforcement; including but not limited to the areas of leadership, management, and administration; to provide a forum for the exchange of information concerning law enforcement and generally fostering effective law enforcement practices.

While our focus is on women in law enforcement, our voice is on all key issues of policing and the impact our agencies can make within our communities.

NAWLEE enthusiastically embraces any opportunity to be involved in the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing. NAWLEE members are situated across the United States, as

well as internationally. As an organization we have much to offer in providing information on issues affecting the law enforcement community. NAWLEE can offer the perspectives of our members' expertise in research as well as congressional testimony on issues related to law enforcement and women in law enforcement.

## **Hiring a Diverse Workforce**

It has been known by us and many others, that in order to best police a certain area, the diversity of a police force should be representative of the community they serve. The national average of women in policing is approximately 12% based on a study by NAWLEE and the IACP in 2013.

### Recommendations

*Target women and minorities as part of the recruitment process. Traditional advertising for these roles most likely needs to be changed.*

*There should also be a mix of officer roles highlighted in any recruiting activity to ensure that not only will those you are targeting see the wide variety of responsibilities (the job is more than just chasing criminals), and the general public will as well. This will help enhance the image issues an agency may have and further support the image of police as guardians and the ones you can count on to help when needed no matter what.*

*It is imperative that organizations place emphasis on skills such as empathy, compassion and communication. These skills are often overlooked in the hiring process and yet the emphasis on influencing others into compliance can often be the very thing that prevents the officer from having to use force.*

*NAWLEE also recommends the Task Force commission a study exploring the impact of women law enforcement officers in lowering the amount of force used, the number of citizen's complaints, and the overall impact women have in law enforcement. In addition, the study should also review the barriers in place, which prevent women from entering the police force. Some examples include, but are not limited to, the appropriate physical fitness standards.*

## **Building Trust**

As with any relationship, trust evolves over time and is based on actions not words alone. In doing so, we must keep in mind that most of our citizens will only come in contact with a police officer during a situation which is not a favorable one. Either this person has been the victim of a crime, is committing an offense, or is receiving something as basic as a traffic citation. Therefore, regardless of the professionalism displayed during the contact, the citizen may not have a favorable view of the police.

While it may take years to build an environment of trust and respect for our officers and our agencies, it can, as we have seen all too often, be destroyed in one quick moment. Often

such a result is due to perceptions not reality. Perceptions can “become” real to many people, which makes the job of policing more difficult.

### Recommendation

*Appropriate training for all new sworn personnel must be established to indoctrinate each one into the reasoning and need for trust to be considered one of the most important tenets of their job. Ways to best earn trust should be integrated into the training.*

## **Defining the Role of the Police in a Democratic Society**

For many years, police have been guardians of the public. Over the decades the political rhetoric of the *War on Crime*, the *War on Drugs*, and the *War on Terrorism* has driven the police to assume a warrior psychology and persona.

Advanced weaponry common on the street today with increased lethality, is being used in schools, churches, and businesses and the police justifiably must have the equipment and technology to respond. Unfortunately the warrior perception is strengthened from these incidents, which are less common than the day-to-day work. Our police officers need to always be seen, by the citizens they serve and protect, as the “good guys”. Good guys you can always turn towards and who are always there when any problem arises.

### Recommendation

*Use “Guardians” as the term and images of our officers. End the use of the term “war”, and begin branding the term “Guardians” into the policing culture.*

## **Community Engagement and Dialogue**

Community Oriented Policing works very well.

The relationship between the police and community cannot improve unless they “get to know” one another. Trust cannot be built when the community only sees the police when something has gone wrong. Time and effort to connect must be spent in times of peace so when there is a crisis, the citizens of the community, know their police force and their honorable intentions.

It helps police officers to have a better perspective of the community needs and it helps the community develop a greater trust and understanding of police officers. It creates partnerships with the community, working towards common goals of problem solving, reducing crime, and making the community a safer environment to live, work, and play.

### Recommendations

*While this may sound obvious, we must ensure the dialogue is open to everyone in the*

*community that is interested and it truly is a dialogue. Community meetings and other discussions with citizens and organizations must provide ample time for listening by police officials.*

*Citizen surveys are another way to learn what communities need or are truly expecting from the police. Clearly results from these surveys alone cannot drive the operations of the department, but the insights gained may be surprising and help guide more resources into an area that has added demands for service, that may not have been considered a priority.*

## **Improving Police and Youth Relations**

One of the benefits of true community engagement is the enhancement of relationships with all of the “stakeholders”. The relationships with our youth are especially important as we have an opportunity to help mentor and steer them away from a future of crime.

In addition, by building these relationships, we can improve not only our investigations by having more people open up about what they have witnessed, but can also prevent some crimes that may be in the planning stages.

### Recommendations

*We must encourage our personnel to volunteer in youth related activities beyond only the police sponsored initiatives. Sport is an excellent avenue to work with and play with our younger members of the community. There are other activities as well where we can serve as mentors and be seen as part of their world, not as an outsider there only to enforce laws.*

*In addition to encouraging individual volunteerism, agencies should consider department “sponsored” activities in the community. Our sports leagues, corporations, and other civic-minded organizations organize events and activities and our agencies can seek to join them whether it is building a playground or other community service projects.*

## **Police Leadership Development**

There are leadership development courses and other training programs currently in existence and such an emphasis is vital to the health of the agency and the community. However, more can be done. In addition, the programs and courses that exist currently may not be affordable for many agencies.

A disheartening fact is that women make up less than 2% of Chiefs of Police or top administrators in law enforcement organizations across the country.

### Recommendations

*Leaders are found and needed in all areas of an organization, not just at the command staff levels. There should be an opportunity to send all levels to training. Leadership must be*

*taught during our academies and in-service training should also be available.*

*There is also a need for proper supervision training.*

*We must also look to private/public partnerships where our personnel can learn from others such as corporate leaders as many of the management issues are similar in nature.*

*Women must be given more opportunities for career development by targeting more women for more of the operational leadership roles and not only ones which do not allow that person to gain the necessary experience to lead the agency.*

In conclusion, NAWLEE recognizes that Congressional support is necessary to recruit, retain and advance women to executive level positions in law enforcement. Currently, women make up only 12% of law enforcement personnel in the United States. Even more disheartening is that women make up less than 2% of Chiefs of Police or top administrators in law enforcement organizations across the country.

The creation of a commission that follows in the footsteps of the 1965 Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, that produced over 200 recommendations, marked the beginning of a change in our methods for dealing with crime and the public, and built the framework for effective law enforcement and public safety initiatives that have been in place for the last forty years.

In conducting this critical review, the Commission will have many opportunities to examine and develop recommendations addressing the broad range of new and emerging challenges that confront law enforcement today; from cyber-crime to non-traditional organized crime, from violent street gangs to homeland security, and many other new responsibilities.

NAWLEE also supports the review to assess and advance women in law enforcement and the substantial benefits that diverse organizations bring to the communities we serve.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of our recommendations further with the Task Force to share specific methods of implementation.

Sincerely,

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