

Oral Testimony
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Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing
"Culture and Diversity"
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Chairpersons Ramsay and Robinson, members of the Task Force, - Thank you for this opportunity for the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE) to give our recommendations to address the issue of culture and diversity in policing.

As women leaders in law enforcement we believe we bring a unique perspective to this important discussion.

NAWLEE agrees that our police agencies should mirror the diversity of the communities we serve. As an organization we are passionate about policing in a fair and impartial manner. But in order to achieve this we must increase the number of women in policing. As you may know, the national average of women serving as police officers has remained stagnant at 12%.

However, we know women bring many valuable attributes to policing and a recent study done in 2005 titled: "Women Police: The Use of Force by and Against Female Officers" by Schuck and Rabe-Hemp, found that female officers generally use less force in police-citizen encounters than do their male counterparts. Overall, the findings support assertions that women and men perform policing duties differently and that hiring more women as police officers may help to reduce excessive force.

So, this brings up two questions. Why do women use less force than men? But more importantly, can their techniques, be trained across genders?

In the following recommendations, NAWLEE is not suggesting anyone make exceptions to the rules of the profession, but **we are challenging the rules themselves.**

Recommendation #1- Conduct an in-depth new study to update past data to clearly identify and define the practices and techniques that have been proven to be effective and train all officers, regardless of gender, in those techniques.

Recommendation #2- Enhanced communications skills will lead to less force. Integrate into training and ongoing in- service education, the art of effective communications skills. Our men and women spend more time talking with those we encounter than we do in the use of any other police procedure. We need to focus our training on de-escalation skills with the same vigor as we do in the training of use of force and defense tactics.

Recommendation #3- As part of the new training we must also add more emphasis on mediation, facilitation and, interpersonal skills, along with emotional intelligence, cultural competency, unconscious bias, and dealing with emotionally disturbed people. Better communications builds public trust, which minimizes use of force.

Recommendation #4- We must place greater emphasis on problem solving policing. Teaching these skills and strategies will go a long way to building trust and turning our culture from “enforcement only” to problem solvers.

Again, we are not asking for exceptions to the rules...We are challenging the rules!

It is no surprise that we believe policing can be enhanced by increasing the number of women in our ranks. We also know we are not the only leaders who think this way. However, our society has NEVER adapted to or encouraged more women to enter policing. As a result the overall number of women in policing has not risen.

Recommendation #5- The profession must shift its recruitment strategies to recruit more women and at the same time, we must ensure our profession makes the changes necessary to take advantage of the unique skills which women bring to policing.

Let me outline some of the challenges and issues we believe prevent women from entering into law enforcement.

- Lack of schedule flexibility for those who wish or already are raising a family.
- Physical standard testing. All female officers must be able to control a situation if and when force of any kind is needed, but having the same exact standards for males and females does not make sense. Again, we aren't asking our profession to make exceptions to these fitness standards-we are simply challenging the rules themselves. It's time for a paradigm shift.

For instance, right now in the State of Wisconsin the plan is to institute new physical fitness standards. It has been determined that in applying this new standard to one

major Wisconsin city that 82% of the female officers currently performing well in police jobs, would fail to meet the new standard! **The end result will be a decrease in the number of women policing and ultimately a decline in the quality of law enforcement services to this particular community and state.**

- There is a lack of consistency on the physical fitness standards and too much emphasis is placed on these standards.
- Some women believe they can't rise into higher ranks and also raise a family.

This is not a gender issue- This is about the quality of law enforcement services across the nation.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.