

Coalition Against Racial Profiling
P.O. Box 41633
Providence, RI 02940

May 12, 2011

Chief Edward A. Mello
Westerly Police Headquarters
60 Airport Road
Westerly, RI 02981

Dear Chief Mello:

Our organizations are writing you in your capacity as head of the R.I. Police Chiefs Association. We write in response to last week's hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on S-219 Sub A, the racial profiling bill, and also as a follow-up to the op-ed written by Michael Évora and Martha Yager, on behalf of our coalition, about RIPCA's withdrawal of support for this compromise bill which had been drafted with the direct collaboration of the chiefs.

At last Thursday's hearing, as you know, the chair of the Judiciary Committee, Sen. McCaffrey, strongly urged the parties to once again sit down at the table to see if this issue could be worked out. Throughout the course of the negotiations that took place over the last few months, our coalition members acted in good faith, with the sincere desire to work out a reasonable Sub A. Both sides made compromises in getting to the language that now appears in the legislation. Although we do not believe we are in a position to sacrifice any more without gutting the bill, and we continue to feel the sting of RIPCA's decision to renege on the compromise that had been reached, we have also concluded that it would be wrong to ignore Sen. McCaffrey's appeal to the parties to still try to work this out. We therefore have decided to take up his offer.

However, in order for any meeting of the parties to be useful, we believe it is essential that we first be given a full explanation for RIPCA's decision to withdraw its support for a bill that had been approved by its members only a week earlier.

The very first sentence of the coalition's op-ed piece was: "The Rhode Island Coalition Against Racial Profiling calls upon the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association for a public accounting of its about-face on House Bill H-5263, the Comprehensive Racial Profiling Prevention Act." To this day, we have received no such accounting. Surely you can appreciate our position that, in order to follow up on Sen. McCaffrey's request and have any further meaningful discussion about the legislation, it is essential that we first learn how and why RIPCA's sudden reversal of position came to pass. We trust that you agree that our coalition deserves no less.

We therefore respectfully ask that you provide us a "public accounting" of RIPCA's about-face so that another sit-down can take place with an understanding on the part of the coalition of how things have ended up in this position.

If there is to be any chance to get legislation enacted this session, time is of the essence. We therefore ask that you respond to this request by next Friday, May 20th. Please send your response to Martha Yager and Nick Figueroa at the following snail mail and email addresses:

P.O. Box41633
Providence, RI 02940

myager@afsc.org, policy@ulmac.org

Once the coalition has had an opportunity to digest the information provided us, we would welcome the opportunity to once again sit down and see if, as Senator McCaffrey urged, the Sub A can be salvaged.

Thank you very much for your anticipated response.

Sincerely,

Joe Almeida,
Former State Representative

Rev. Dr. Donald C. Anderson,
Rhode Island State Council of Churches

Antonio Barajas,
Rhode Island Mexican-American Association

Kate Brock,
Ocean State Action

Steven Brown,
Rhode Island Affiliate, American Civil Liberties
Union

Ana Yoleida Chirino,
Fuerza Laboral

Tish DiPrete,
Urban League of Rhode Island

Michael Évora,
Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights

Karen Feldman,
Young Voices

Nick Figueroa,
Univocal Legislative Minority Advisory
Coalition (ULMAC)

Roberto Gonzalez, Esq.,
Gonzalez Law Offices, Inc.

John J. Hardiman,
Office of the Public Defender

Rick Harris,
National Association of Social Workers, Rhode
Island

Chanravy Proeung,
Providence Youth Student Movement (PrYSM)

Bill Shuey,
International Institute of Rhode Island

Jim Vincent
NAACP, Providence Chapter

Charles Wilson
National Association of Black Law Enforcement
Officers

Martha Yager, American Friends Service
Committee, Southeast New England

CC: Members of the House Judiciary Committee,
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee