

My name is Norman Stafford, and I am an emeritus Professor of English at ASU and a thirty-five year resident of Jonesboro.

Mayor Perrin, Members of the City Council: Thank you for allowing me, as a member of the Diversity Coalition, to speak before you tonight. There are three major components in developing a diverse workforce: recruitment, applicant selection, and retention. Because the Coalition has not yet received the necessary data, the present recommendations are largely limited to recruitment. The data we have received is as follows: There were 407 applicants to the Jonesboro Police Department during the last four recruitment cycles (2 years). Forty-eight of these applicants were minorities—11.8% of the applicant pool. These figures reflect a clear disparity, given the approximately 25% minority population of Jonesboro. These figures suggest that the public safety departments need more aggressive strategies in recruitment of qualified minority and women applicants.

Because you have our recommendations before you, I won't repeat them. Instead I will focus on why the Coalition believes its recommendations will enhance and improve recruitment in the Police and Fire Departments, not just of minority and women candidates, but of all worthy applicants.

The ten recommendations focus on three over-riding concerns: First, creation of positive perceptions among minorities and women that their contributions to the police force and fire department are desired and welcome. Second, assurance that they will have adequate access to the testing requirements, the nature of the tests, and procedures necessary to be successful. Third, confidence that their efforts will be judged fairly and that the procedures are as objective as possible.

Recommendations one and two—initiating a diversity task force and a recruitment team (themselves racially diverse and having women members)—would be a first step in demonstrating that Jonesboro's public safety departments are proactive in recruiting minorities and women. At present, that positive perception is missing—the statistics themselves creating the absence.

Creating a positive perception depends on minorities and women having access to timely information about vacancies in the public safety departments, having prior knowledge of the nature of the tests they must pass, and having confidence that all relevant procedures are transparent. Although the city

is to be commended for fulfilling the legal requirements in these areas, recommendations three through five would make apparent to all that our public safety departments are actively, not passively, committed to minority recruitment, going beyond the minimal standards.

Recommendation number five relates to an area where the coalition has observed weaknesses. The Public Safety Departments need a strong recruitment network of partners in Jonesboro and the region—such as churches, community centers, educational and training institutions, ethnic and cultural organizations and businesses, veterans organizations, as well as, coordination with other job sites such as the Arkansas Workforce and Chamber of Commerce. The Diversity Coalition may be helpful here. It has over the past several months been identifying and developing such a network.

Recommendations six through nine encompass different forms of outreach programs that would generate a positive image of the city's efforts. Some members of the Diversity Coalition, as well as other concerned citizens of Jonesboro, have expertise in these areas and, if the city wishes, would willingly participate in these endeavors.

Recommendation number ten—a citizens committee, reflecting the demographic profile of Jonesboro as well as officers from the various ranks—has the potential to remove the aura of subjectivity and passivity that presently exists in minority recruitment and replace it with an assurance to all applicants, and all of Jonesboro, that hiring practices are fair, standards objective, and commitment to diverse representation real.

Let me now turn to my former colleague and fellow Coalition member, George Grant, for the Coalition's concluding remarks.