

**GEORGIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO
THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS
MEETING MINUTES**

June 23, 2020

The Georgia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Committee) convened via teleconference to discuss civil rights in the state. The meeting was open to the public and took place from approximately 3:00 pm – 4:19 pm ET.

Advisory Committee Members:

Present:

1. Chantel Mullen, *Chair*
2. Percy Brown
3. Benita Dodd Cotton
4. Jake Evans
5. Gerardo (Jerry) Gonzalez, *Immediate Past Chair*
6. James Hunt
7. Eric Jacobson
8. Tarece Johnson
9. Richard Lorenc
10. De'Andre Pickett
11. Bryan Ramos
12. Jonathan Rogers
13. Baker Smith
14. Laura Emiko Soltis

Absent:

1. None

Commission Staff Present:

1. Melissa Wojnaroski, DFO
2. Catherine Lhamon, USCCR Chair
3. Rukku Singla, Special Assistant
4. Mallory Trachtenberg, Civil Rights Analyst
5. Carolyn Allen, Support Specialist

Members of the Public Present:

1. Fletcher Hodges, public participant

Meeting Notes/Decisions Made:

The Chair welcomed all members. The DFO conducted roll and confirmed a quorum of members present.

Opening Remarks:

The Committee heard remarks from Commission Chair, Catherine Lhamon. The Chair discussed current Commission studies:

- Current focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on voting rights
- Also studying disparate impact of COVID-19 on Native American communities
- Recently approved a report on subminimum wages for people with disabilities.
- Also looking at racial disparities in maternal mortality rates, though this has been postponed until November 2020, with the report expected in May 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Study on the federal role in bail reform has been postponed until February of 2021
- FEMA disaster relief study comparing aid to Puerto Rico with mainland US aid, has been postponed due to the Coronavirus.
- The Commission is currently evaluating other topics, looking at Advisory Committee work to identify relevant topics to collaborate and build on.

In the ensuing discussion Committee members asked whether it would be preferable for the Committee to build on Commission studies or to select unique topics. Answer:

- Both have value. State specific information for Commission study topics is extremely valuable and augments Commission studies
- Sometimes SACs lead the way and bring other topics to the Commission's attention which is also valuable.

Approval of Minutes

Baker Smith moved to approve the minutes of the Committee's May 26, 2020 meeting as drafted. Bryan Ramos seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Discussion: Civil Rights in Georgia

The Committee discussed civil rights concerns in Georgia. The Committee reviewed outcomes from their online poll to gauge interest in various proposed topics. The results were as follows:

CIVIL RIGHTS TOPICS, FIRST AND SECOND CHOICE SELECTIONS:

1. The Federal Role in Calling for Bail Reform (**4**, *2 first and 2 second choice selections*)
2. Sub-minimum Wages for People with Disabilities (**4**, *2 first and 2 second*)
3. The 2020 Census and Redistricting in Georgia (**3**, *1 first and 2 second*)
4. Fair Housing (**3**, *1 first and 2 second*)
5. Maternal Health Disparities (**3**, *1 first and 2 second*)
6. Hate Crimes (**2**, *first choice*)
7. Voting Rights and COVID-19 (**2**, *one first and one second*)
8. Farm Worker and Domestic Worker Exclusion from NLRA (**2**, *one first and one second*)

9. Religious Discrimination and COVID-19 (**1, first choice**)
10. Mental Health Stigmatization (**1, first choice**)
11. FEMA's Natural Disaster Response (**1, second choice**)

The Committee discussed the merits of adopting a project topic that would augment current work of the Commission versus bring a different topic to the Commission's attention.

VOTE I

Tarece Johnson moved to bring a different topic to the Commission's attention. Baker Smith seconded the motion. The motion passed with a roll-call vote of 10 in favor and 4 opposed.

1. Chantel Mullen - No
2. Percy Brown - Yes
3. Benita Dodd Cotton - No
4. Jake Evans - Yes
5. Gerardo (Jerry) Gonzalez - Yes
6. James Hunt - No
7. Eric Jacobson - No
8. Tarece Johnson - Yes
9. Richard Lorenc - Yes
10. De'Andre Pickett - Yes
11. Bryan Ramos - Yes
12. Jonathan Rogers - Yes
13. Baker Smith – Yes
14. Laura Emiko Soltis - Yes

The Committee continued discussion of potential civil rights topics for study, in consideration of previously submitted topics (above), as well as Chair Lhamon's remarks and current events.

VOTE II

Jerry Gonzalez moved to study criminal justice and police reform, including the disparate impact of police activity in communities of color. Eric Jacobson seconded the motion.

The motion passed by voice vote with 12 in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstentions.¹

Committee Officers: The Chair invited Committee members to serve as an officer of the Committee. Nominations currently received for officer positions are as follows:

- Vice Chair
 - Laura Emiko Soltis

¹ One abstention was voiced during the meeting. Another member did not voice any vote or abstention during the voice-vote, and thus was subsequently recorded as abstained.

- Jake Evans
- DeAndre S. Pickett
- Tarece Johnson
- **Secretary**
 - Jonathan Rogers
- **Public Relations Officer**
 - Laura Emiko Soltis
 - Percy Brown
 - Tarece Johnson
 - Jonathan Rogers
- **Editorial Officer**
 - Baker Smith
 - Jonathan Rogers
- **Parliamentarian**
 - DeAndre S. Pickett
 - Jonathan Rogers

The Committee will vote for officer positions via survey monkey (staff to set up and distribute survey).

- Members who wish to add or withdraw their name for candidacy should contact staff no later than COB Friday June 26 for consideration.
- Members submitting their candidacy for an officer position are encouraged to share a brief professional bio. Staff will collect bios and distribute to Committee members for review prior to voting.

Announcements and Updates

- None

Next Steps:

1. Jerry Gonzalez volunteered to write a topic proposal for the forthcoming policing project. Tarece Johnson, De'Andre Pickett, and Chantel Mullen offered to collaborate and assist.
2. Staff will survey Committee members for availability for the next Committee meeting.
3. Staff will create a survey for members to vote on officer nominations.
4. Members wishing to submit or change their candidacy for an officer position should notify staff no later than COB Friday June 26. Members are encouraged to submit a brief professional bio for Committee review prior to voting.

Open Comment: At the conclusion of the meeting public lines were opened for comment. No public comment was received.

Adjournment: 4:19 pm ET

Attachments (0)