

## The Governor's Council: Worse Than Doing Nothing

In the aftermath of the killing of Philando Castile, Dayton convened a Governor's Council on Law Enforcement and Community Relations with a hand-picked group of people. Ostensibly, the purpose was to examine issues with policing and consider solutions. Unfortunately, this is little more than a smokescreen. The problem is not what to do about police abuse; it's the political will to actually do it.

Modeled off the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing convened by Obama, this Governor's Council is meant to give the appearance of taking action while desperately maintaining the status quo. In the case of the President's Task Force, the only real result was funding for body cameras. The Governor's Council recommendations are so weak and vague as to be similarly useless.

### Wrong Framing

The entire premise of the Governor's Council starts with the goal of improving "police-community relations." However, this is a false framing. This framing proposes that if police and the community could somehow just get along better, trust would be built and the problem would be solved. It also places half the responsibility for the problem on the community, when we have little control over police conduct that undermines trust.

What is missing from the efforts of the Governor's Council is any recognition of the need for police accountability. In fact, while the Council has a number of working groups, none focus on accountability.

Unless efforts shift from "police-community relations" to police accountability, the problems that spurred the creation of the Council will continue. In fact, if police were held accountable for their actions in meaningful ways, police misconduct would largely disappear and police-community relations would improve on their own with no special efforts needed.

### Faulty Process

Peeling back layer after layer of the Governor's Council's administrative process – how members were selected, how meetings have been organized, how procedure is followed, how the resulting recommendations have been carefully manipulated every step of the way – reveals zero commitment to actually stopping police brutality.

#### *Who's at the Table?*

The downfall of the Council starts with who is sitting at the table. Appointments to the Council were made in secret. The community had absolutely no input into the membership of the Council. The Council is stacked with elected officials, police leaders and other cheerleaders for the cops. Most of these people on the Council have had no direct experience with police brutality. The few community representatives on the Council have felt tokenized and are not even voting members.

#### *Where and When? Meeting Notice Issues*

For most of the existence of the Council, meeting information was not readily available to the public. Most meetings were never posted anywhere on the state website. For the few that were, the information was embedded in the Mark and Tina Blog [Gov. Dayton and Lt. Gov. Smith] and were not searchable. Even if the public could find out about the meetings, they were held in the daytime at locations on the capitol grounds with no parking, and in rooms that even the capitol information desk couldn't locate. Some meetings were canceled or changed at the last minute, making it even more difficult for the public to attend.

## *The Law Says...Open Meeting Violations*

Even when the public could find the meetings, the Council failed to provide copies of documents they discussed in the meetings, in violation of the State's open meeting law. Minutes from the meetings have been virtually impossible to locate and when the minutes are available, they are generally incomplete and inaccurate.

### *I Have an Idea...*

You would think that a council put together to seek solutions to the problems of policing would be happy to have input from the public, but think again.

Once members of the public could finally get past the many barriers to even attend the meetings, they learned that the council has no interest in their input. Council chair James Burroughs, the Inclusion Officer for the State of Minnesota, has stated that he will not share written recommendations from the public but will instead "synthesize" (sanitize) the recommendations before council members see them.

After insistence by the community, the council finally scheduled a few "listening sessions" but many of the suggestions made by the public have been left out of the recommendations. This input included powerful, evidence-based suggestions that would make a real difference in improving the quality of policing.

### **Real Solutions vs Phony Fluff**

The people impacted by bad policing are the most prepared to offer real solutions. One such solution is an independent special prosecutor with sole responsibility for overseeing the investigation and prosecution of police shootings and other serious incidents. This is necessary because the interdependence of county attorneys and law enforcement officers, including the BCA, inhibits the ability of county attorneys to hold errant officers accountable.

An additional recommendation brought forward is training in peer intervention such as that provided by International Ethics and Leadership Training Bureau. This training empowers officers to intervene to stop fellow officers from engaging in conduct that would impact their careers and reputations as well as harm the community.

By contrast, the Council's recommendations include spending money for training that several studies have already shown is completely ineffective. Another phony and unmeasurable solution is "help[ing] police and citizens understand each other."

The Governor's Council recommendations are quite likely to be funded. They must be robust, actual solutions. The community deserves no less.

### **Not Learning from Past Experience**

No matter how many more members of the community are killed by police officers, those in power seem to continue their commitment to learning nothing from past experience. When police kill the next person, do not wonder why the Governor's Council recommendations failed to prevent it. There's nothing in their recommendations that can or will.

Information provided by **COMMUNITIES UNITED AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY**. Join us! We meet every Saturday at 1:30 at 4200 Cedar Avenue South in Minneapolis. For more information or for help with a police brutality incident, call our 24-hour hotline: **612-874-STOP** or see our website at **www.CUAPB.org**.