

Cooper Establishes Criminal Justice Racial Inequity Task Force

By Administrator

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Governor Roy Cooper formed the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice. The task force will recommend solutions to stop discriminatory law enforcement and criminal justice practices, and hold public safety officers accountable. “We must acknowledge racial inequities in our systems of law enforcement and criminal justice, and then work to eliminate them. This task force will address policies and procedures that disproportionately burden communities of color,” said Governor Cooper.

Led by Attorney General Josh Stein and North Carolina Supreme Court Associate Justice Anita Earls, the task force will convene a wide range of stakeholders including: community policing advocates, state and local law enforcement agencies, justice-involved individuals, representatives of the judicial branch, individuals from marginalized populations and more.

The task force will develop and help implement policy solutions to address systemic racial bias in criminal justice and submit legislative and municipal recommendations on or before December 1, 2020.

Additionally, the Order creates a Center for the Prevention of Law Enforcement Use of Deadly Force within the State Bureau of Investigation to track statistics and improve training related to the use of force.

This week, Secretary of the Department of Public Safety Erik Hooks directed law enforcement agencies under the purview of DPS to ensure each division has a duty to intervene policy in place. He also directed that divisions conduct policy reviews on use of force, de-escalation techniques, arrest procedures, cultural sensitivity training and internal investigation processes. Executive Order No. 145 directs cabinet agencies and encourages non-cabinet state agencies with sworn law enforcement officers to do the same.

“We can stop the use of excessive force by police and we know what is needed to achieve racial equity, now is the time to put that knowledge to work,” said North Carolina Supreme Court Associate Justice Anita Earls. “I am grateful to the Governor and the Attorney General for recognizing that the Judicial Branch has a crucial role to play in eliminating racial disparities in the criminal justice system, and I am committed to a collaborative process with meaningful community involvement to achieve those goals in short order.”

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“The Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice will consider and implement strategies to bring about real change in the criminal justice system. For way too long, Black people have not been treated equitably in the United States. We have to fix that,” said North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein. “I look forward to working closely with co-chair Justice Anita Earls and the full Task Force to making North Carolina a safe place for every person, no matter who you are.”

Read the full Order and FAQ.

Communities of color are disproportionately affected at each stage of the criminal justice system, with national data showing the following:

- Black adults are 5.9 times as likely to be incarcerated than white adults;
- Hispanic adults are 3.1 times as likely to be incarcerated than white adults;
- Black drivers are approximately twice as likely as white drivers to be pulled over by law enforcement for a traffic stop;
- Black defendants are more likely to be jailed before trial than white defendants;
- The murders of white people are more likely to be solved than the murders of Black people;
- When Black men and white men are convicted of the same crime, Black men receive a prison sentence that is 20 percent longer;
- Black women are imprisoned at twice the rate as white women; and
- Black men are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement than are white men, and Black women are 1.4 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement than are white women.

This task force follows Governor Cooper’s Executive Order 143, which will address longstanding social, environmental, economic, and health disparities in communities of color that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.