

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**



COMMISSION MEETING

September 11, 2013
One Judiciary Square, 441 Fourth Street, NW, Conference Room 1117

ATTENDEES

Commissioners:

Nkechi Taifa, Chairperson
Edwin Powell, Secretary
Motoko Aizawa
Alexandra Beninda
Earline Budd
Rahim Jenkins
Mathew McCollough
Denise Reed
David Scruggs

Commission on Human Rights Staff:

David C. Simmons, Chief Administrative Law Judge
Eli Bruch, Administrative Law Judge
Dianne S. Harris, Administrative Law Judge
Christina Cobb, Law Clerk

Office of Human Rights Staff:

Alexis Taylor, General Counsel
Rahsaan Coefield, Program Director-Investigations
Suzanne Greenfield, Director, Citywide Bullying Prevention Program
Monica Palacio, Director, Language Access

Members of the Community:

Rod Boggs, Washington Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
Robert Warren, People for Fairness Coalition
Reginald Black, Shelter, Housing and Respectful Change

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Taifa called the Commission's September meeting to order at 6:31pm. The Commission had a moment of silence to remember and honor the victims of the terrorist attacks that occurred twelve years prior.

II. ROLL CALL

Secretary Powell conducted the roll call. Nine Commissioners were present at the meeting. Since at least eight Commissioners were present, a quorum was reached.

III. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE JULY MEETING

The Commissioners adopted the Commission's July meeting minutes.

IV. REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

General Counsel Alexis Taylor gave the report on behalf of the Office and gave a brief overview of its performance since the last Commission meeting.

Ms. Taylor provided the Commissioners with detailed statistics on OHR's performance in July and August 2013. Thus far in FY 2013, OHR's total settlement benefits to date are \$1,770,379.45.

Thus far in FY 2013, OHR has issued 15 probable cause determinations.

Ms. Taylor told the Commissioners that OHR has launched a campaign to promote immigrant rights and will hold an open to the public event on September 28th. The event is titled "*Immigrants Contribute: America, We Sing Back.*"

This month, OHR, working along with the Department of Labor, trained over 300 people on the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Mr. Coefield introduced himself to the Commission and gave brief overview of his career background.

V. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Chief Judge Simmons delivered the report of the Commission and presented an overview of its performance since the last Commission meeting.

The Commission currently has a docket of 13 Commission cases, 5 OHR cases, and 5 CBX appeals.

Thus far in FY 2013, the Commission closed 9 Commission cases, 5 Office cases, and 3 CBX cases. Chief Judge Simmons expects to reach many of the Commission's closure goals for the fiscal year.

The Chairperson and Chief Judge Simmons have come up with a couple of suggestions to get Commissioners more involved in the daily work of the Commission. First, the Chairperson has decided to disband the standing CBX Committee, and instead, assign CBX cases to Commissioners just like regular Commission cases. Second, instead of

Commissioners reading the evidentiary hearing transcript when making their determination in a case, the proposed idea is to have Commissioners actually sit-in on evidentiary hearings.

There are several Commission Committees that are in need of assistance. These Commission Committees include: the Neil Alexander Humanitarian Award Committee, Human Rights Awards Gala Committee, and the Youth Human Rights Ambassador Committee.

Chief Judge Simmons introduced the Commission's fall semester law clerks to the Commissioners: Christina Cobb and Judy Bennett Garner.

In law clerk news, former law clerk Eboni Robinson was selected to become a member of a law journal at Wake Forest Law School.

Administrative Law Judge Eli Bruch recently had a son, Ari Jack Bruch.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business was discussed.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Chairperson Taifa reminded Commissioners of the importance of regular attendance at Commission meetings.

Monica Palacio, Director of OHR's Language Access Program and a former Commissioner, introduced herself to the Commission and gave a brief overview of her program.

A. Presentation on Bullying Prevention Effort

Ms. Greenfield introduced herself to the Commission and gave a brief overview and update on her program's accomplishments.

B. Appointment of Volunteers for CBX Tribunal and Various Committees

Chairperson Taifa designated Commissioners Jenkins, Reed, and Scruggs to head a CBX Tribunal.

C. Update Regarding Commission/Office Awards Gala

The Awards Gala will be held on December 5th from 5:00pm to 8:00pm at the Kaiser Family Foundation, Barbara Jordan Conference Center.

Commissioners Aizawa, Budd, and Powell volunteered to serve on this Committee.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Rod Boggs, of the Washington Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, spoke about a recent report on racial disparities in arrests in the District.

Robert Warren, of the People for Fairness Coalition, spoke about the importance of affordable housing in the District.

Reginald Black, of the Shelter, Housing and Respectful Change, spoke about the importance of affordable housing in the District, particularly for the elderly.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The Commission's September meeting was adjourned at 7:58pm.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Commission held an Executive Session closed to the public.