



National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Minnesota/Dakotas Area State Conference
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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press Conference Location and Time
11:00 am – Friday June 12, 2015
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
Front Entrance

**MINNESOTA NAACP REQUESTS STATE AUDIT TO INVESTIGATE ENFORCEMENT
OF CONTRACTING, HUMAN RIGHTS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION LAWS; CITING 20
YEARS OF NONCOMPLIANCE**

Audit needed to address negligence causing disparity in black communities

ST. PAUL, Minn. (June 12, 2015) – The Minnesota chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) today announced, the urgent need for the state to agree to finance an audit during the special session to ensure equal opportunity compliance in state government operations. The request will be made to Senator Tom Bakk, Senate Majority Leader, Kurt Daudt, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Governor Mark Dayton and in response to a recent report by the Council on Black Minnesotans that uncovered decades-long lack of enforcement of the state’s contracting, affirmative action and human rights acts.

“We believe this decade long negligence has stymied the freedoms of Minnesotans of African heritage,” says **WC Jordan President of the State Chapter of the NAACP**. “It is at the foundation of the ferocious cry for equity and racial justice in the marketplace. We stand here at 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, the address of our state capitol and fifty one years removed from the passage of the civil rights act calling for an audit to ensure compliances with these critical laws.”

The Council on Black Minnesotan’s analysis found there has been no net increase in the base funding of the Minnesota Human Rights Department in nearly two decades; not one state department has a conforming affirmative action plan; and for 16 years, the Minnesota Department of Administration has not used its authority to instantaneously correct disparities in contracting when detected.

In light of these findings, the NAACP calls for the Office of the Governor, the Senate and House of Representatives to agree at the special session to approve and finance an independent audit covering the last five years of the administrative application of Minnesota Statute 16C (Procurement Act), 43A (Affirmative Action Act) and 363A (Human Rights Act).

The NAACP believes these findings in the Council on Black Minnesotans analysis, which was completely ignored by the legislature and led to legislative retaliation toward the council, underlies the findings in a 2013, Wall Street Journal 24/7 Report; which identifies Minnesota as the second worst place in America for Black people. The report indicates a typical black household in Minnesota earned less than half the median income of white households in 2013, well below 62.3 percent nationwide. Low incomes among the black population are likely due in part to a high unemployment

rate. While 15 percent of black workers in the state were unemployed in 2013, fewer than 5 percent of the total workforce did not have a job, a gap nearly twice as large as the national gap.

“This matter has reached a crisis,” says **Nekima Levey-Pounds, President of the Minneapolis Branch of the NAACP**. “It needs and deserves the urgent attention of Minnesota’s leadership to determine if the laws are being administered as required, and if not, what additional steps the state needs to take to address oversight, coordination, and administration of these laws.”

In addition, the NAACP requests the Governor, Senate and House Representatives create a working group comprised of the state ethnic councils that desires to participate to provide audit oversight and to determine if there is a need for corrective action and bring forth recommendations.

“Workforce equality is reached with the employment of individuals with cultural and linguistic competence to diversify an institution’s professional base, if the state can audit the Urban League and Ethnic Councils it should be willing to audit to determine if its laws that ensure equal opportunity are being administered correctly” says **Jeffery Martin, President of the Saint Paul Branch of the NAACP**.

Patwin Lawrence, Board Chair of the Council on Black Minnesotans stated, “Our goal with the publishing of our report was to meet out statutory duty and help our state establish a commitment to cultural agility in the state’s government operations. We did not expect the state to retaliate against us by taking the responsibility for such reports away. If our report is not going to be accepted, then conduct an audit not another disparity study. The audit is needed to quantify how Minnesota moves forward with eradicating and prevent disparities in the operation of state government and the marketplace. This audit lays the foundation for the necessary plan to do so.”

ABOUT THE NAACP

The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. The vision of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights without discrimination based on race.

WHY AUDIT VERSUS DISPARITY STUDY?

AUDITS

Audits are conducted to determine whether federal contractors and subcontractors (this includes state government) are in compliance with applicable federal and /or state laws, related to equal opportunity. Audits identify if personnel is following contracting and hiring policies and procedures that would result in equal opportunity. Audits also identify if a protected class of people have been denied equal opportunity in the areas of employment and contracting because policies and procedures are not being followed. Audits ensure that availability, utilization, and under-utilization of protected class people have been identified and that acceptable plans have been established to correct deficiencies. Audits ensure that the equal opportunity and affirmative action laws as outlined in state policies and procedures are sufficient to ensure equal opportunity for protected class persons. Audits determine if the administrative application of policies and procedures are generating underutilization.

DISPARITY STUDIES

Disparity studies compare the number of municipal contracts awarded to minority and non-minority firms to determine whether minority firms received a disproportionately smaller share of awards (or payments based on existing contracts) in relation to their representation in the industries studied. Government uses them to evaluate their hiring programs for statistical disparities and evidence of discrimination in anticipation of legal challenges to the programs. The studies usually consist of a historical analysis as well as establish anecdotal evidence of discrimination.