



**U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Planned Reports for Fiscal Years 2018 & 2019
Approved June 16, 2017**

An Assessment of Minority Voting Rights Obstacles in the United States

The Commission was established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957 as an independent, bipartisan fact-finding federal agency, empowered to “investigate allegations in writing under oath or affirmation that certain citizens of the United States are being deprived of their right to vote...” Since its inception, the Commission has frequently examined the state of voting rights. Congress mandates the Commission to issue one annual statutory enforcement report; the Commission, by majority vote, selected this topic to be its 2018 report.

The 2016 Presidential Election was the first in 50 years without the full protections of Voting Rights Act (VRA) in place. The 2013 Supreme Court decision *Shelby County v. Holder* eliminated longstanding protections of the VRA, clearing the way in many states for new voting measures, several of which were previously blocked or deterred due to their discriminatory effect or purpose. Since 2010, more than 20 states have implemented new measures that limit access to registration and voting. Our report will examine U.S. Department of Justice’s voting rights enforcement efforts following the 2006 reauthorization of the VRA, including the impact of the *Shelby County* decision, as well as the proliferation of restrictions on voter access. The Commission will provide findings and assess the need for recommendations regarding enforcement efforts and/or Congressional action to ensure voter access.

Efficacy of Federal Agency Civil Rights Enforcement

The Commission will conduct a comprehensive assessment of federal agency offices tasked with civil rights enforcement. The report will look at budget and funding, the efficiency of the office, and the efficacy of its enforcement efforts. Specifically, the report will examine the degree to which current budgets and staffing allow the offices to perform their statutory and regulatory functions; the management practices in place in the offices to determine whether these practices are sufficient to meet the volume of civil rights issues within the offices’ jurisdiction; and the efficacy of recent resolution efforts from the offices. The Commission unanimously selected this project to be its 2019 statutory enforcement report.

Responding to Hate Crimes at the Federal, State, and Local Levels

According to the FBI's latest *Hate Crimes Statistics* report for 2015, overall hate incidents increased 6.7 percent and anti-Muslim hate crimes by 67 percent compared to 2014. Federal, state, and local governments play important roles in monitoring, reporting, prosecuting, and preventing hate crimes. The Commission has decided to investigate three areas: (1) best practices for local law enforcement on collecting and reporting hate crimes data and overcome barriers to reporting from hate crimes victims; (2) prosecution of hate crimes and enforcement of hate crimes laws; and (3) the Department of Education's role in preventing and responding to hate crimes.

The School-to-Prison Pipeline: The Intersection of Students of Color and Children with Disabilities

School discipline policies often have a disproportionate and negative impact on students of color and students with disabilities. The Commission will examine the "intersectionality" of school discipline policies for students who experience discrimination due to their race, their disability status, *and* their status as students of color with a disability.

A View from the States

The Commission will conduct a survey of all 51 of its State Advisory Committees (SACs) to determine which civil rights issues the SAC members consider most pressing and significant in their respective states. As the "eyes and ears" of the Commission, our SACs offer a unique ability to assess the state of civil rights around the country.

Women in Prison

The Commission will review conditions of confinement of incarcerated women in prison systems around the country. The Commission will address the ways prison systems, primarily designed for male inmates, are able to protect and care for female prisoners. Among other issues, women are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault and have gender-specific health needs prisons do not always address. The Commission seeks to determine how the civil rights of incarcerated women can be upheld and protected.