

Media Advisory

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New Racial Profiling Data Due by Law Enforcement Today; Civil Rights Groups Urge Local Governments and the Public to Analyze Searches

Today, each police and sheriff's department in the state is required to submit to its city council or county commissioners court its second annual racial profiling data report. This is one of the requirements of the 2001 state racial profiling law authored by Senator Royce West (D-Dallas) and Representative Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston).

The NAACP, LULAC, ACLU and the Texas Criminal Justice Reform Coalition have formed the "Campaign to End Racial Profiling." They are urging city and county leaders, the media, and the public to direct attention to reported search rates, as well as reported contraband rates. According to Ana Yanez Correa, Policy Director for Texas LULAC, "it's important to focus on searches because that is where the real racial disparities are. In many cities, Latinos and blacks are searched more often during a traffic stop, but are less likely than whites to be found with drugs or other contraband. This is an outrage. LULAC and our partners strongly urge city leaders across the state to examine racial disparities in police searches and get some answers."

Will Harrell, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, agrees: "If Latinos and African Americans are being searched at higher rates than whites, that means law enforcement is disproportionately looking for crime in communities of color. In many cases, they are fishing for drugs and crime in dark waters. That in itself is criminal. Searches must be the focus of any debate on racial profiling."

The Campaign to End Racial Profiling announces a new website called the "Racial Profiling Data Project," where journalists, reporters, and concerned citizens can actually do an online analysis of their local departments' racial profiling figures. The site is located at www.racialprofilingdatapoint.org. Also available on the website is a fact sheet called "Racial Profiling: What's in the Numbers." This sheet provides explanations for media on how to interpret their local departments' figures.

For more information on how to interpret local racial profiling figures or other questions, please contact Carlos Villarreal at (512) 441-8123 ext 110.