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Detroit police oversight board calls for new, dedicated national agency on police standards and practices

The City of Detroit's 46-year-old civilian oversight Board of Police Commissioners called Thursday for a national agency dedicated to police standards and practices to ensure systemic reforms amid swelling mistrust of law enforcement after recent fatal police encounters and police-involved shootings involving white officers and people of color.

"America has a crisis of trust in law enforcement right now, and national action is needed to ensure systemic reforms are consistent across the country," said Board Chair Willie E. Bell of District 4, who also serves on the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement board. "A national bureau can help end the crisis by charting a path for reform and then enforcing standards for fair and Constitutional police practices."

In a resolution approved Thursday, the Board calls for a U.S. bureau to raise criteria for and audit professional standards and best practices in U.S. law enforcement agencies, including the use of equipment like body-worn cameras, electronic weapons, and other special technology. It also would serve as a forensic monitor on cases of officer-involved shootings and fatal police encounters, and require every law enforcement agency to report disciplinary cases and the adjudication of those cases so the Bureau can review for systemic problems, along with reviewing data on use of force and other categories now reported to the FBI.

The Board noted that the new bureau did not need to start from scratch but could come from re-organization at the U.S. Justice Department. A special panel will discuss the bureau's creation as well as other possible reforms on Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020 at 3 p.m. during the Board of Police Commissioners weekly meeting, after which Detroit will issue its final proposal and advocate for the national bureau.

A copy of the resolution is attached.



Created by the 1974 City Charter, the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners has supervisory authority and oversight over the Police Department. Under the 2012 Charter, the Board is comprised of 11 civilian members; Detroiters elect seven members by district, and the mayor appoints and the city council confirms four at-large members. All board members serve as unpaid volunteers. The current members are Willie E. Bell, Darryl D. Brown, Shirley A. Burch, Willie E. Burton, Lisa Carter, William M. Davis, Evette Griffie, Jesus Hernandez, Jim Holley, Annie Holt and Martin Jones. The Board is holding its weekly meeting each Thursday at 3 p.m. on Zoom.us. due to the coronavirus public health crisis. **For the Board meeting schedule, Zoom.us instructions, video, minutes, and other information, visit the website at detroitmi.gov/bopc.**



Resolution calling for a national agency on Police Standards and Practices

- Whereas, police-involved shootings of unarmed, non-threatening black people continue to occur some three months since global protests began a call for reform and the end of such lethal police brutality. The protests were sparked by the death of George Floyd, who died when a Minneapolis officer pinned him to the ground and suffocated him as other officers stood by on Memorial Day, and
- Whereas, the recent police-involved shootings of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, Georgia; Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky; and Atatiana Jefferson in Fort Worth, Texas also underscore that reforms must happen now in every municipality. These and other recent cases signify a centuries-old truth for people of color: no offense at all or an allegation of a minor offense can get you killed by law enforcement, and
- Whereas, while not every police department should be blamed for the actions of a few agencies, and not every police officer should be vilified by the brutality or lack of intervention of others in uniform, it is clear that the United States is experiencing a crisis of trust in law enforcement rooted in racial bias and injustice. It is a national problem, and action must occur urgently on a national scale to restore public trust in justice and liberty for all so that no person, and especially no person of color, will fear immediate death or injury when encountering police; therefore be it
- Resolved, that the City of Detroit Board of Police Commissioners calls for the creation of a national bureau for Police and Law Enforcement Standards and Practices. Its mission would include raising criteria for and auditing professional standards and best practices in U.S. law enforcement agencies, including the use of equipment like body-worn cameras, electronic weapons, and other special technology. It also would serve as a forensic monitor on cases of officer-involved shootings and fatal police encounters, and require every law enforcement agency to report disciplinary cases and the adjudication of those cases so the Bureau can review for systemic problems, as well as review data on use of force and other categories now reported to the FBI. The new bureau, which could result from re-organization at the Justice Department, would issue annual reports on its work and findings; and be it further
- Resolved, that the Board will hold a panel discussion on such a national agency and other national reforms on Thursday, September 3, 2020 as part of its weekly meeting at 3 p.m., and later make a formal proposal.