

Landon State Office Bldg.
900 S.W. Jackson St., Suite 568 S.
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1258



Phone: (785) 296-3206
Fax: (785) 296-0589
TTY (785) 296-0245
800# 1-888-793-6874
www.khrc.net

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Topeka--The Kansas Human Rights Commission (KHRC) is pleased to announce that Robert G. Lay, formerly of Topeka, Kansas, and Rehelio "Ray" A. Samüel, Lawrence, Kansas, have been recognized by the International Association of Human Rights Agencies and the National Association of Human Rights Workers at their conferences in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Lay is recognized for his distinguished career, support and service to the Kansas Human Rights Commission, thereby contributing to the cause of civil rights and enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination. In particular, Lay was recognized as the only person to have served the Kansas Human Rights Commission in all of the following capacities: Investigator, Supervisor, Assistant Director, Acting Executive Director, Executive Director, and Commissioner. Lay played a key role in the Kansas Human Rights Commission successful resolution of a backlog in the mid-1990's. Lay was instrumental in establishing the Kansas Human Rights Commission as one of the most successful Civil and Human Rights offices in the nation. Lay's foresight, hard work and dedication contributed to the Kansas Human Rights Commission recovering \$15,382,500 and other benefits for victims of alleged discrimination in fiscal years 1995 – 2012. Lay retired from the Kansas Human Rights Commission in 1997. Lay received a *James E. Butler Civil Rights Award* in 2008. This award recognizes individuals whose support and service to the Kansas Human Rights Commission has contributed to the cause of civil rights and enforcement of Kansas laws prohibiting discrimination.

Samüel is honored for his distinguished career and contributions in the human rights field, thereby promoting civil and human rights. Samüel served in the United States military for over 20 years, where he served in various capacities with the major objective of improving race relations, equal opportunity in all aspects of military life, and improving Base/Post and Local Community (Town/City) relations. Samüel was hired by City of Lawrence, Kansas, on June 1, 1972 in the dual capacity of Director Human Relations/Human Resources/Community Social Development, and the City of Lawrence, Kansas, Senior Executive/Administrative Member of the City of Lawrence Human Relations Commission. He was in charge of enforcing civil rights laws for housing, employment, and public accommodations. He provided distinguished service to the City of Lawrence, Kansas, until his retirement on February 1, 2007. Samüel was a dedicated volunteer and leader in various organizations in Lawrence and Kansas; and has been recognized and received numerous awards for his military service, volunteerism, leadership, and civil rights advocacy.

Kansas Human Rights Commission Executive Director William V. Minner said, "Bob Lay was the architect of the Commission's rebirth to allow the agency to take its place as a nationally recognized civil rights office. He created a mechanism to reduce the agency's backlog of cases awaiting investigation and streamlined the process to allow more timely investigation of complaints, quicker resolutions of complaints, and more satisfactory results to all parties."

Minner said, “Ray Samuel is affectionately known among the local human relation groups as the ‘Dean’ of civil/human rights in Kansas. He was on the frontlines of civil and human rights in Lawrence in the early 1970’s. He worked with the local businesses to obtain compliance with anti-discrimination laws in both housing and employment in Lawrence. He was effective in both formal and informal resolution of civil rights complaints.”

The Kansas Human Rights Commission nominated Lay and Samüel for the honors. The resolutions were approved by IAOHRA’s and NAHRW’s individual boards. The resolutions honoring Lay and Samüel will be presented to them at the Kansas Human Rights Commission meeting on September 21, 2012, in Topeka.

The mission of the Kansas Human Rights Commission is to prevent and eliminate discrimination and assure equal opportunities in all employment relations, to eliminate and prevent discrimination, segregation or separation, and assure equal opportunities in all places of public accommodations and housing. The Kansas Human Rights Commission achieves its mission primarily through the receipt, investigation and resolution of discrimination complaints.

The International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) is a professional association of over 140 state, county, and city governmental human rights commissions in the United States of America and several statutory human rights agencies in Canada. IAOHRA goals are “to foster human and intergroup relations, to enhance human rights practices under law, and to promote civil and human rights around the world”.

The National Association of Human Rights Workers (NAHRW) is an organization of individuals committed to providing education, training, research, networking, and professional development to its members in order to enable them to foster equability within a diverse society.

Lay now resides in Hillsboro, Oregon.

For more information contact: Ruth Glover, Assistant Director, Kansas Human Rights Commission,
Ph. (785) 296-3206, ruth.glover@khrc.state.ks.us