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Press Release

For: SB 486: An Act concerning the task force on racial profiling

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During the 2006 Kansas Legislative Session, the Legislature and Governor Kathleen Sebelius once again addressed the issue of racial and other profiling. Senate Bill 486 was signed by Sebelius on May 15, 2006. This bill makes amendments to the original racial and other profiling law that was passed during the 2005 Legislative Session.

Senate Bill 77, which became law on July 1, 2005, made racial and other profiling unlawful. The law defined racial and other profiling as the practice of a law enforcement officer or agency relying, as the sole factor, on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender or religious dress in selecting which individuals to subject to routine investigatory activities in conjunction with traffic stops. The 2005 legislation also created a 15-member task force to design a method for the uniform collection of data.

SB 486 amended K.S.A. 2005 Supp. 22-4607 to allow for that task force to be in place until July 1, 2009, and further defined the organization and role of the task force. SB 486 states that the governor's task force on racial profiling shall work in partnership with the local and state law enforcement agencies to review current policies and make recommendations for future policies and procedures statewide for the full implementation of the provisions of K.S.A. 2005 Sup. 22-4606 through 22-4611. The governor's racial profiling task force shall hold public hearings and meetings as needed to involve and inform the public on issues related to racial profiling.

“The makeup of the Task Force encourages communication between law enforcement administrators and citizen's group representatives. It provides a venue for discussion that all too often only occurred one sentence at a time in media reports and editorial pages before the formation of this group,” Rick Fischli, Kansas Human Rights Commission Racial and Other Profiling Supervisor said. “Most of the previous discussions on the topic of racial profiling have been around complaints filed with law enforcement agencies, with citizen's groups and law enforcement frequently at odds. This Task Force gives a safe and sanctioned venue for discussion of the issues that have arisen from the new racial profiling law.”

Individuals who feel that they have been subjected to racial or other profiling may file a complaint with the law enforcement agency involved or with the Kansas Human Rights Commission. The law also provides for an individual's civil cause of action upon disposition of the complaint.

“The requirements of the still-new law prohibiting racial profiling by law enforcement place much emphasis on each law enforcement agency's internal policy and training,” Fischli said. “This diverse group's discussion of the issues and formation of recommendations will give this State's efforts to reduce the number of racial profiling and other bias-based policing incidents credibility with the general public.”