

NAACP NEWS

www.naacpga.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 22, 2016



Contact: Constance Wallace
Email: info@naacpga.org

GEORGIA NAACP CALLS ON GOVERNOR TO GO BEYOND HALF MEASURES AND ENACT MEANINGFUL POLICE REFORM

NAACP Supports Better Pay and Training for Georgia's Law Enforcement

The Georgia NAACP is skeptical that a legislative package being considered by Governor Nathan Deal aimed at showing support poorly paid and trained state law enforcement officers will satisfy protesters seeking meaningful improvement to police and community relations as well as overall reforms to the criminal justice system.

"It appears to be a half measure. The details are still unclear. However, if Governor Deal is interested in doing more than political window-dressing; we will work collaboratively with him and other stakeholders" said Francys Johnson, Statesboro Attorney and Georgia NAACP President.

Speaking after a criminal justice panel in Cleveland at the Republican National Convention, Deal said Georgia needs to open a discussion with lawmakers about rewarding police officers for their work but also ensuring they get more sensitivity training to handle a new wave of protests. Governor Deal failed to acknowledge any problem in the culture, patterns, and/or practices of policing that many experts believe contribute the breakdown of community relationships.

"We must fix the broken apparatus of policing. At this point, I give Governor Deal credit for not burying his head in the sand and acting as if there is not a serious problem. However, unless Governor Deal's package include more than just an overdue pay raise for some peace officers and more so-called sensitivity training; unfortunately violence and unrest will continue" said Johnson.

Deal's comments come after days of protests in Atlanta and other 18 cities across Georgia following the shooting deaths of unarmed black men by police – and the assassinations of police officers in Baton Rouge and Dallas.

The NAACP quickly condemned the violence towards peace officers including reports of attacks in Georgia. "The NAACP condemns this violence. It is antithetical to our core values as Americans. Change must come to policing in America but it cannot and will not come at the end of a barrel of a gun," said Johnson.

The NAACP and all our civil and human rights partners remain committed to seeking criminal justice reform. "Beyond heartbreaking, these latest tragedy calls for officials to break the inertia that may paralyze local and state authorities eliminating racial disparities across the criminal justice system and in policing specifically," said Johnson.

100 Edgewood Avenue, Suite 1610, Atlanta, Georgia 30303

"We are not here to only protest; we offer solutions. Specifically, all state and municipal authorities should ensure their agencies policing practices adhere to the Justice Department protocols and the Presidential Commission on 21st Century Policing. Last year nearly 1000 people lost their lives in police custody across the United States. These tragedies, as well as our communities and country, demand wholesale reform" said Johnson.

According to Gerald Griggs, Atlanta Civil Rights Attorney and Georgia NAACP Criminal Justice Committee Chair, this is precisely why the NAACP is calling for the Protect with Respect Policing Reform Agenda. "First, we are calling on states to pass comprehensive racial profiling laws. One racial profiling law, co-authored and passed with the support of the NAACP in Missouri enabled the Department of Justice to hold the Ferguson Police Department accountable through its 'pattern and practice' investigation," said Griggs.

Other demands include full support of and passage of two crucial pieces of federal legislation. Last summer, the NAACP led a 1,002-mile march from Selma, Alabama to Washington DC to demand members of Congress pass the Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act (LETIA) and the End Racial Profiling Act. LETIA addresses the issue of police accountability and trust between police departments and their communities. The legislation also provides incentives for police organizations to adopt standards to ensure that incidents of misconduct are reduced through management training and protocols. ERPA would create a federal prohibition on racial profiling, mandate data collection, provide funding for law enforcement retraining and withhold funding to law enforcement agencies that do not comply. Governor Deal could propose state legislation modeled on LETIA and ERPA.

Yet, the Georgia NAACP acknowledges this is a political problem as well. "Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump must seriously address criminal justice reform. We want them to clearly state their commitment to address criminal justice reform and the issues of racial profiling, use of excessive force, and stop and frisk abuses. As the two candidates lead rallies and fundraising events seeking our support and our vote, we must demand that they support legislation to reform our fractured criminal justice system and end the murder of black and brown men and women at the hands of police," said Johnson.

Peaceful protests are planned to continue around Metro Atlanta and in Dublin, Macon, Savannah, and Valdosta.

####

For more information about the work of the Georgia NAACP, please visit our website at www.naacpga.org.

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The Georgia NAACP has had an unbroken presence in Georgia since 1917. The Georgia NAACP maintains a network of branches throughout Georgia, from cities to small rural counties. The Georgia NAACP has been the most effective and consistent advocates for civil and human rights in Georgia.