



HEADQUARTERS ACTIVITY

In February, the Commission [heard from](#) Karen Korematsu and Neal Katyal on the internment of Japanese Americans. Korematsu, daughter of the late Fred Korematsu and director of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute, spoke about her father's legal challenge to Executive Order 9066 and the internment. Neal Katyal, former Acting Solicitor General of the United States, spoke about his work leading to the U.S. government's official "[Confession of Error](#)" regarding the federal government's legal positions with respect to internment and in the *Korematsu* case.



The Commission also voted on two statements:

- **The Commission [expressed](#) concern over two Executive Orders promoting religious and national origin discrimination.** Chair Lhamon stated: "Government action that communicates animus rather than equity strikes against our core national ideals. This Commission calls for adherence to constitutional principles in our national interest."
- **The Commission [reaffirmed](#) its longstanding commitment to safeguarding the right to vote.** Chair Lhamon reiterated this commitment: "The right to vote is fundamental to American democracy, and the Commission will continue to do all in its power to protect that right for all citizens."

In March, the Commission held a [briefing](#) in Washington on Targeted Fines and Fees against Low-Income People of Color: Civil Rights and Constitutional Implications. See written testimony by the panelists [here](#).



The Commission also voted on a [statement](#) condemning recently reported hate incidents and calling for the federal government to take increased action in combatting them. Chair Lhamon expressed her concern: “No community should have to fear attacks based on how they look, where they are from, whom they love, or what they believe. We must all come together to fight against such hate and intolerance, which has no place in our society.”

STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC) ACTIVITY

Since the New Year, SACs around the country have been active in investigating and reporting on civil rights issues in their states. We thank the members of SACs listed below for determining important topics for investigation, hosting briefings, and issuing – or planning to issue – reports on these important topics. Here are some highlights of recent activity.

January

The Indiana SAC released its [report](#) on Civil Rights and the School-to-Prison Pipeline in Indiana. Thanks to Chair Diane Clements-Boyd for presenting the report and its findings and recommendations to the Commission in January. At the request of the SAC, the Commission sent letters to several government entities, encouraging them to review the report and its findings and recommendations. These included: the Indiana General Assembly, the Indiana Departments of Corrections and Education, and the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice.

February

The Kansas SAC released its [report](#) on Voting Rights and the Kansas Secure and Fair Elections Act (SAFE). Thanks to Chair Mildred Edwards for presenting the report and its findings and recommendations to the Commission in March. The Commission is sending letters to Governor Brownback, the Kansas legislature,

Congress, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Election Assistance Commission, encouraging them to review the report and its recommendations.

The Connecticut SAC held a [briefing](#) on the use of solitary confinement in Connecticut correctional facilities.

March

The Maine SAC released its [report](#) on Human Trafficking in Maine.

At the request of the Michigan SAC, the Commission sent [letters](#) on the SAC's October 2016 civil assets forfeiture [report](#) to Governor Snyder, state legislative leadership, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Minnesota SAC held a [briefing](#), attended by Commissioner Karen Narasaki, on the state's implementation of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing recommendations as related to police practices and the potential disparate impact they may have on the basis of race, color, age, religion, or disability.

The New York SAC held a [briefing](#), attended by Commissioners Debo Adegbile and David Kladney, to examine the policies and practices of the New York Police Department, including their impact on youth of color.

The Illinois SAC held a [briefing](#), attended by Staff Director Mauro Morales and former Chair Marty Castro, on civil rights and voting in Illinois.

The Nevada SAC held a [briefing](#) on whether municipal fines and fees disparately impact federally protected communities in the state, and, if so, what steps can be taken to remedy the impact. One of the speakers attended the fines and fees briefing at the Commission the following week in DC, and his testimony included commentary about how powerfully impacted he was by the briefing in Nevada.

The South Dakota SAC held a [briefing](#) on the subtle effects of racism in the state.

The Commission [voted to approve](#) four new State Advisory Committees. Congratulations and welcome to:

- **Florida.** Elizabeth Foley, Chair, resident of Key Largo; Laura Blundy, Orlando; Bradford Brown, Miami-Dade County; Laura Finley, Miami Shores; Jennifer Glass, Merritt Island; Wilhemina Lewis, Fort Pierce; Don Mizell, Fort Lauderdale; Joy Moore, Seminole; Matthew Oberly, Fort Lauderdale; Victor Romano, Biscayne Park; Nadine Smith, St. Petersburg; Fernanto Teson, Tallahassee; Lourdes Villanueva, Plant City; Toufic Zakharia, Miami.

- **Louisiana.** Robert Lancaster, Chair, Baton Rouge; Andrea Armstrong, New Orleans; James Baehr, New Orleans; Yakima Black, Baker; Randy Boudreaux, New Orleans; Marjorie Esman, New Orleans; George Fowler, New Orleans; Robert Garda, New Orleans; Michelle Ghetti, Baton Rouge; Enrique Hurtado, Baton Rouge; Saru Matambanadzo, New Orleans; H. Naci Mocan, Baton Rouge; Cyndi Nguyen, New Orleans; Robert Scott, Baton Rouge; Gina Womack, New Orleans.
- **Nebraska.** Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado, Chair, Omaha; Dwayne Ball, Bellevue; Michaëlle Baumert, Elkhorn; Janet Eckerson, Lincoln; Judi Gaiashkibos, Lincoln; Ted Hamann, Lincoln; Jason Hayes, Lincoln; Andrew Hollingsead, Papillion; Nikitah Imani, Omaha; Peter Longo, Kearney; Chad Richter, Omaha; Jose Soto, Lincoln; Peter Szto, Omaha; Kimberly Taylor-Riley, Omaha.
- **Texas.** Mimi Marziani, Chair, Austin; Joni Baker, College Station; Josh Blackman, Houston; Charles Burchett, Kirbyville; Rogene Calvert, Houston; Frances Carnot, San Antonio; Jason Casellas, Houston; Cecilia Castillo, San Marcos; Bobby Lydia, Duncanville; Merrill Matthews, Coppell; Feyi Obamehinti, Keller; Christina Sanders, Houston; Ronald Smeberg, San Antonio; Barbara Walters, Plano.

LOOKING AHEAD

On April 21, in Washington, DC, Commissioners will meet for our monthly business meeting.

On April 25, in Baltimore, MD, the Maryland SAC will hold a roundtable discussion on bail reform and fines and fees.

On May 19, in Washington, DC, the Commission will hold a briefing on collateral consequences of incarceration.

On June 14, in Lewiston, ME, the Maine SAC will hold a briefing on the criminalization of the mentally ill.

DID YOU KNOW?

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower first created the Commission (1957), he charged it with investigating voter obstruction. Its first stop: Montgomery, Alabama, where it launched an investigation on voter rights. But it was quickly met with resistance and obstruction from state officials. George Wallace, then a state court judge, ordered voter registration records to be impounded and threatened to jail and lock up any agent of the Commission who tried to obtain voting records! President Eisenhower denounced the Court's behavior as "reprehensible." Yet the Commission was not deterred. Instead of examining records, it heard witness after witness testify about frustrating and often unsuccessful attempts to vote. Ultimately, the Commission was victorious and the judge

was cited for criminal contempt of court. (Special thanks to the Commission's Barbara de La Viez for this information.)

(See also: <http://www.civilrights.org/publications/reports/commission/early-years.html>)

We hope you find this newsletter informative. Suggestions or ideas for future editions? Email the Commission's Director of Communications and Public Engagement, Brian Walch, at bwalch@usccr.gov.

For information about the Commission, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).