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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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BUSINESS MEETING

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2026

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The Commission convened via telephone conference at 10:00 a.m. EST, Rochelle Garza, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT:

ROCHELLE GARZA, Chair
VICTORIA NOURSE, Vice Chair
J. CHRISTIAN ADAMS, Commissioner
STEPHEN GILCHRIST, Commissioner
MONDAIRE JONES, Commissioner
PETER KIRSANOW, Commissioner
GLENN D. MAGPANTAY, Commissioner

MARIK XAVIER-BRIER, Acting Staff Director
DAVID GANZ, General Counsel and
Parliamentarian

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1 STAFF PRESENT:

2 DEAN CRAFT
3 PIOTR CZAPLICKI
4 JULIAN NELSON-SAUNDERS
5 ESSENCE PERRY
6 MICHELE YORKMAN-RAMEY

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (10:04 a.m.)

3 MR. CZAPLICKI: Good day and welcome to
4 the January 2026 business meeting. Today's
5 conference is being recorded. At this time, I would
6 like to turn the conference over to Chair Rochelle
7 Garza. Please go ahead.

8 CHAIR GARZA: Good morning, everyone.
9 We're going to go ahead and get started. This
10 business meeting of the United States Commission
11 on Civil Rights comes to order at 10:08 a.m. Eastern
12 Time on Friday, January 16, 2026. This meeting is
13 taking place via telephone conference. I'm the
14 chair of the Commission, Rochelle Garza. And since
15 we are all attending by phone, I'd like to start
16 with a roll call, so please confirm your presence
17 when I say your name.

18 Vice Chair Nourse?

19 VICE CHAIR NOURSE: Here.

20 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Adams?

21 COMMISSIONER ADAMS: Here.

22 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Gilchrist?

23 COMMISSIONER GILCHRIST: I'm present.

24 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Jones?

25 COMMISSIONER JONES: Present.

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1 CHAIR GARZA: Commissioner Kirsanow?

2 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Happy New Year.

3 CHAIR GARZA: Happy New Year.

4 Commissioner Magpantay?

5 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Happy New Year.

6 CHAIR GARZA: Both of those are present,
7 so we have a quorum. Thank you. Thank you for
8 that.

9 Is the court reporter present? And if
10 they cannot come off of mute, I can verify that they
11 are present.

12 COURT REPORTER: Good morning, I'm
13 present.

14 CHAIR GARZA: Wonderful. Is the Staff
15 Director present?

16 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: I'm here.

17 COMMISSIONER JONES: Is the
18 parliamentarian present?

19 MR. GANZ: I'm present.

20 CHAIR GARZA: Great. All right, so
21 before we proceed to today's agenda, I just want
22 to begin by welcoming my fellow commissioners and
23 our staff back for the new year. This is the
24 Commission's first business meeting of 2026, and
25 I appreciate everyone's flexibility and

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1 professionalism as we resume our work following an
2 extended period of disruption. As commissioners
3 and staff know, the Commission is returning from
4 a prolonged government shutdown compounded by the
5 holiday period and ongoing unrelated -- I'm sorry,
6 ongoing uncertainty related to commissioner
7 appointments and quorum. And despite these
8 challenges, the Commission continues to move
9 forward on its core responsibilities. Our
10 statutory mandate has not changed. We are here to
11 protect the civil rights of all people in this
12 country and to respond to congressional requests
13 in a fair, independent, and bipartisan manner.

14 I also want to acknowledge recent updates
15 regarding commissioner appointments. The
16 Commission has received communications from the
17 White House and from Congress concerning the
18 reappointment of several commissioners to new
19 6-year terms. On November 25th of 2025, the White
20 House informed the Commission that the President
21 reappointed Commissioner Christian Adams of
22 Virginia to serve as a member of the U.S. Commission
23 on Civil Rights for a term expiring on December 5th
24 of 2031 and Commissioner Stephen Gilchrist of South
25 Carolina to serve as a member of the Commission for

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1 a term expiring on November 29, 2031.

2 In addition, on December 15th of 2025, we
3 received an announcement in the Congressional
4 Record. The Speaker of the House reappointed
5 Commissioner Peter N. Kirisanow of Ohio to serve for
6 a term expiring on December 15, 2031.

7 As chair, my priorities for the coming year
8 remain clear: to protect the Commission's
9 independence, to elevate the work of our state
10 advisory committees, and to ensure that our
11 investigations and reports address the most urgent
12 civil rights challenges of our time. And so
13 consistent with those priorities, the Commission
14 was unable to convene the November 2025 public
15 briefing for a statutory enforcement report
16 examining the federal response to antisemitism on
17 college and university campuses due to the
18 government shutdown, but since that time, the
19 commissioners conducted a notational vote and
20 unanimously agreed to hold the public briefing on
21 February 19, 2026, followed by a public listening
22 session on February 20th, 2026. This work directly
23 responds to the bipartisan congressional request
24 and remains one of the Commission's highest
25 priorities.

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1 The Commission is also finalizing a report
2 on language access at a moment when national policy
3 developments raise serious concerns about millions
4 of Americans' access to government services, and
5 we expect to bring that report to the Commission
6 for final review and vote in February.

7 In addition, the Commission has
8 unanimously voted to support an investigation into
9 mental health in the juvenile justice system, a
10 system that disproportionately impacts children of
11 color and other vulnerable youth. We are preparing
12 for a public briefing and listening session on that
13 topic in June of 2026. And finally, at our last
14 business meeting prior to the shutdown, members of
15 the Congressional Hispanic Caucus urged the
16 Commission to examine concerns related to the racial
17 profiling of Latino Americans.

18 Now that the Commission has resumed
19 operations, we will work deliberately and carefully
20 to address those concerns consistent with our
21 statutory mandate and investigative processes. At
22 every step, the Commission will continue to shine
23 a light on civil rights violations, defend equal
24 protection under the law, and ensure that students,
25 families, and communities never left without

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1 recourse.

2 And with that, with all of those
3 announcements, we're going ahead and proceed with
4 today's business. We're now going to proceed with
5 today's agenda as posted on the Federal Register.

6 I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

7 CHAIR GARZA: We are going to be
8 considering the following: first, a state advisory
9 committee presentation, and then followed by the
10 Staff Director's Report.

11 Are there any motions to amend the current
12 agenda?

13 Okay, hearing none, we will move to
14 consider the first agenda item.

15 II. BUSINESS MEETING

16 CHAIR GARZA: We're going to hear from our
17 Washington State Advisory Committee Chair Alexes
18 Harris on the committee's report entitled Physical
19 Barriers to Accessibility for Individuals With
20 Disabilities.

21 Thank you, Chair Harris, for being here.
22 I'm going to turn the floor over to you.

23 A. STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

24 MS. HARRIS: Thank you so much, Chair
25 Garza, and to the members of the committee for

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1 inviting me to speak today and also for the work
2 that you do to protect civil rights.

3 Good morning, I am Alexes Harris. I am
4 the former chair of the Washington State Advisory
5 Committee. For identification purposes, I am a
6 sociology professor and chair of the American Ethnic
7 Studies Department at the University of Washington.

8 Today, as you noted, I will be presenting the
9 findings of our report, Physical Barriers To
10 Accessibility For People With Disabilities, which
11 was completed and voted upon by the committee in
12 March of 2024. I did term out in 2024, so I'm no
13 longer on the committee at this time.

14 In terms of the rationale for the report,
15 the topic of the report was motivated by one of our
16 committee members who uses a wheelchair and is an
17 advocate for disability rights in Washington State.

18 They submitted a topic report and we discussed as
19 a committee the topic, and we learned a great deal
20 from his experiences and decided to focus on our
21 2023-2024 work in this area.

22 For context, in 2015, Disability Rights
23 Washington filed a lawsuit, Reynoldson, et al.
24 versus the City of Seattle, asking a Federal Court
25 to help in ensuring that the City of Seattle makes

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1 its streets safe and accessible for people with
2 mobility disabilities. In 2017, a settlement
3 agreement was entered into laying out a plan for
4 Seattle to fulfill the promise of the ADA,
5 furthering equal access to people with disabilities
6 who live, work, or travel in Seattle.

7 And there were two key settlement pieces.

8 One required the city to build or fix 1,250 curb
9 ramps each year for the next 18 years. That's
10 22,500 curb ramps total. These are often called
11 cutouts. So if you're walking on a sidewalk and
12 you need to cross the street, the cutout provides
13 access for someone who is using some type of device
14 with wheels to get into the street, cross the street,
15 and then get back up on that ramp to the sidewalk
16 safely.

17 The city also agreed to make its best,
18 quote, unquote, its best efforts to investigate curb
19 ramp requests within 30 days and to fix them within
20 12 months. So we had several public hearings and
21 witness testimony, and I will report some
22 significant problems across Washington State.
23 I'll go through the eight findings really quickly.

24 The first finding was that physical access
25 continues to be a challenge for individuals with

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1 disabilities in Washington State. Even though the
2 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with
3 Disabilities Act has been in existence for decades,
4 localities are not fully complying with
5 accessibility standards in public areas.

6 The second finding: Physical
7 accessibility is not consistent throughout
8 Washington State, as each distinct county has
9 varying levels of investment in accessibility for
10 individuals with disabilities.

11 Third, there is a lack of dedicated funding
12 to meet current ADA compliance standards. This
13 lack of funding limits both improvements to existing
14 infrastructure and new projects to expand access.

15 Fourth, enforcement of ADA compliance is
16 largely dependent on individual lawsuits and
17 individual complaints filed by affected
18 individuals.

19 The fifth finding is that because of the
20 complainant-driven nature of the remedy process,
21 authorities do not respond equitably to inadequate
22 physical access.

23 Sixth, multiple federal and state agencies
24 issue regulations, provide technical assistance,
25 and enforce different sections of the ADA. And the

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1 siloed enforcement system leads to confusion as to
2 which agency is responsible for enforcing
3 compliance and where complaints should be filed.

4 Seventh, public knowledge is very limited
5 regarding ADA mandates and requirements. In
6 addition, many professionals who are responsible
7 for compliance work, they actually lack appropriate
8 training, resulting in continued confusion and
9 inadequate compliance.

10 And then finally, policymakers who
11 emphasize community engagement are more likely to
12 ensure equitable physical access in Washington
13 State.

14 So our related recommendations are
15 twofold. The first is that we recommend that the
16 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recommends
17 earmarked funds specifically for ADA-related
18 projects within the government's operation budget
19 at the state level. The earmarked funds could
20 create specific grants designated for ADA projects
21 for accessibility and make existing public
22 transportation infrastructure ADA-compliant.

23 We also, under this bucket, suggest that
24 the U.S. Commission recommend that the creation of
25 accessibility fund for businesses occurs to help

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1 businesses become compliant and focus on especially
2 rural communities that require high levels of ADA
3 accessibility investments. Under this bucket, we
4 suggest that you recommend that there's a mandate
5 and fund the replacement of older public
6 transportation vehicles that cannot be made
7 accessible. That's the first bucket of policy
8 recommendations.

9 The second is that we recommend to the
10 Washington State Legislature that they create an
11 agency that is dedicated to ADA compliance and
12 allocating government funds for accessibility
13 infrastructure. This office should ensure that
14 larger localities within Washington have a
15 designated staff position for coordinating and
16 ensuring ADA compliance, that they provide
17 educational resources and guidance to local
18 jurisdictions, that they hold these jurisdictions
19 accountable when they are not making appropriate
20 investments and improving their ADA compliance,
21 that they guide complainants through the complaint
22 process. This may include case managers that
23 assist complainants and follow their cases or
24 similar oversight. And we suggest the state create
25 a certification for businesses that attest that they

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1 are ADA compliant and allows them to be protected
2 from future litigation.

3 We found it was important that there's a
4 communication between businesses that have
5 construction or businesses that we want people to
6 have access to that we understand the pressure and
7 the cost to be ADA-compliant, so there's a real
8 emphasis in the testimony that was given that
9 there's some type of partnership with the State with
10 people who need access and with business owners to
11 make the locations ADA-compliant.

12 In conclusion, our report highlights the
13 limited public knowledge about ADA mandates and the
14 inadequate training for compliance, and these
15 further compound the challenges that people with
16 disabilities face. The committee wants to
17 highlight the importance of community engagement,
18 particularly through accessible communities'
19 advisory committees, and that the importance of
20 engaging with individuals who are directly impacted
21 by the barriers to physical accessibility is the
22 best way to improve access in Washington State and
23 other jurisdictions. Hearing from people who have
24 mobility challenges in front of them is really
25 important to see the world from their perspective.

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1 The committee urges both federal and state
2 government to prioritize and enforce the
3 groundbreaking Americans with Disability Act. I
4 think my biggest takeaway, and I think the biggest
5 takeaway I hope that the commissioners on this call
6 hear, is that when you're driving down the street
7 or walking down the street, notice the sidewalk that
8 you're on. Is there a sidewalk? Is there a cutout?

9 And your view of the world could change
10 dramatically if you begin to look for spaces. If
11 I was in a wheelchair, if I was using a wheelchair
12 or using a walker, how would I get around? And
13 you'll start to see the massive amount of challenges
14 that people with disabilities in our country face.

15 I hope our findings and recommendations
16 will contribute to positive reforms, and I really
17 thank you for your time and welcome questions.
18 Especially, I'd like to thank Brooke Perry who has
19 been an amazing supporter of the Washington Advisory
20 Committee over several years. Thank you.

21 CHAIR GARZA: Well, thank you so much,
22 Chair Harris. I do want to -- before we move on
23 to questions, I do want to assure you that my
24 colleagues and I are actively working to reappoint
25 civil rights leaders from Washington State to serve

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1 on the advisory committee and we remain steadfast
2 in our commitment to that work. Thank you for your
3 presentation. I'll let others chime in if they have
4 a question before I take the chair's privilege and
5 ask a question. So if you would unmute and ask to
6 be recognized.

7 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Chair Garza.

8 CHAIR GARZA: Of course.

9 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: This is
10 Commissioner Glenn Magpantay. Thank you for the
11 report. Can I just ask -- this is a great report.
12 I appreciate the findings and the sensitivity to
13 the limitations on budget to accommodate the needs.

14 Can I ask have the findings and
15 recommendations been kind of transmitted to the City
16 of Seattle elected officials and policymakers who
17 could address some of these concerns?

18 MS. HARRIS: You know, honestly,
19 Commissioner, I timed out right at the end of the
20 report, and I don't know if or how the Committee
21 has been active or not in distributing the report.

22 So I have to say I'm sorry, I don't know.

23 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: To my staff, I
24 would -- to the staff of the Commission, I would
25 say we are working -- it is inactive because it

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1 hasn't been reported, and we'll try to do that.
2 Let's try to make sure that we get these findings
3 and recommendations to the elected officials and
4 the policymakers who could address these issues.

5 I think they should know about the great work that
6 the State Advisory Committee in the great State of
7 Washington have done and the findings that they have
8 found.

9 MS. HARRIS: I agree, thank you. And we
10 have done that in the past with prior reports when
11 I was on the advisory committee. And yes, so maybe
12 I should check in with former members and see if
13 they've taken the lead in forwarding it out. I
14 agree. This is important information. It needs to
15 be shared.

16 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: The Staff
17 Director, that's okay, yes?

18 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Yes, absolutely.

19 MS. HARRIS: Okay. Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Thank you.

21 CHAIR GARZA: Any other questions from
22 other commissioners?

23 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Madam Chair,
24 Kirsanow here.

25 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, go ahead Commissioner

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1 | Kirsanow.

2 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Thank you. Ms.
3 Harris, thanks very much for your service and also
4 for the report. I have a question that I should
5 know the answer to, but does Washington State have
6 a separate agency that deals with civil rights
7 abuses, civil rights violations?

8 MS. HARRIS: There is an office where
9 complaints can be made. What we found with the
10 testimony, if I can recall, because honestly, this
11 was two years ago, is that it's piecemeal, dependent
12 upon ADA complaints of potential violations. And
13 so people were unsure, depending upon what county
14 or municipality they were in, where to make the
15 direct complaint. And many of the people that
16 testified said that they would make a complaint to
17 the office, but would never hear back.

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1 accountable, or there was no other oversight of
2 businesses or even the city streets to be
3 accessible.

4 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Thank you.

5 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you for sharing a
6 little bit of that. I think my fellow commissioners
7 are not aware of this, but my first job out of
8 college, I worked on accessibility issues for my
9 local transportation provider, and it is a huge
10 challenge to get a community up to speed and making
11 sure that you have access for people with
12 disabilities. Those curbside accesses are
13 absolutely critical for anyone in a wheelchair to
14 be able to get anywhere and to traverse the city
15 easily.

16 So I do want to say thank you for this
17 investigation. I think that it's really clear-cut
18 in terms of the benefits and the needs to a community
19 that is often underserved, and the onus is on them
20 to push to get the accessibility that they really
21 need.

22 So one of the things I wanted to ask is
23 did you have any -- I know it was some time ago,
24 but did you have any testimony around transportation
25 and maybe some of the challenges there? Because

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1 when I was working in that capacity, it was an issue
2 of an 80-20 match, so there was a percentage that
3 the city had to pay for sidewalk improvements,
4 adding the ADA curbside, and then there was a match
5 from the state government. Is that kind of -- was
6 that the structure? Is that the structure in
7 Washington?

8 MS. HARRIS: I don't know the fiscal
9 distribution of helping locations be compliant.
10 I know it's just mandatory when you make new curbs
11 or new areas that they become compliant in
12 Washington. So honestly, I don't know that
13 context.

14 In terms of did we talk about
15 transportation, yes. We talked about
16 transportation a lot. And there's this amazing
17 organization, Disability Rights Washington, that
18 did testify and had even a project, particularly
19 in rural areas in Washington State, showing,
20 demonstrating for people just how problematic it
21 is. That's what I can recall.

22 I do not recall if there were any pockets
23 of funding, and that's why one of our
24 recommendations was is that there should be special
25 federal funding grants that allow businesses or even

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1 jurisdictions that want to improve their sidewalks
2 to apply for those grants from the federal level.

3 So I know that funding is definitely a big barrier
4 for jurisdictions and also businesses to become
5 compliant.

6 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, that makes a lot sense
7 for updating, right --

8 MS. HARRIS: Right.

9 CHAIR GARZA: -- versus, if they're
10 building a new one, of course it should be compliant,
11 but the updating is the challenging piece, and that
12 might have been the difference between what I saw
13 versus what you're seeing. And I really like the
14 recommendations that you've made here.

15 I'm excited for us, the Commission, to
16 follow up on them, so we'll work with our Acting
17 Deputy Staff Director Marik Xavier-Brier and make
18 sure that we uplift these recommendations that you
19 all have made. But before I move on and thank our
20 presenter, are there any other questions from
21 commissioners?

22 Okay, Commissioner Kirsanow?

23 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Yes, thank you.

24 One other question with respect to education. Did
25 you have any evidence adduced related to the status

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1 of the accommodations provided by, say,
2 state-controlled schools and even colleges related
3 to disabilities?

4 MS. HARRIS: No, we were strictly focused
5 on mobility. But as a university professor, I can
6 attest that we are working within our university
7 very quickly to make sure that all of our teaching
8 materials are ADA-compliant by the spring, so I do
9 know on the ground from experience that many
10 institutions, K through higher ed, are working on
11 the updated mandates for ADA compliance for
12 students.

13 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Thank you.

14 MS. HARRIS: Thank you all very much for
15 your time. I appreciate it.

16 CHAIR GARZA: Well, thank you very much
17 for coming and presenting. If there are no further
18 questions, this is going to conclude the
19 presentations from our advisory committee chairs.

20 So thank you Chair Harris for your service and
21 leadership on the Washington Advisory Committee.

22 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Chair Garza.

23 CHAIR GARZA: Wonderful. Okay, we're
24 going to go ahead and move on with the rest of our
25 agenda. Up next, we have our Acting Staff Director

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1 Marik Xavier-Brier. We're going to go ahead and
2 now turn to you for your monthly Staff Director's
3 Report. The floor is yours.

4 B. STAFF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

5 MR. XAVIER-BRIER: Thank you, Madam Chair
6 and good morning, commissioners. Welcome back and
7 Happy New Year.

8 In the interest of time, I have nothing
9 further to add than what's already contained within
10 the monthly report. But if commissioners have any
11 questions about the information contained in the
12 report, I'm happy to answer them. Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER JONES: Madam Chair?

14 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, Commissioner Jones.

15 COMMISSIONER JONES: Point of privilege?

16 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, you're recognized.

17 COMMISSIONER JONES: I want to address a
18 very important issue relating to the investigation
19 that Commissioner Kirsanow and I are leading into
20 the scourge of antisemitism on America's college
21 and university campuses. Specifically, that
22 investigation, as some of you know, is currently
23 being impeded by the Departments of Education,
24 Justice, and Health and Human Services. And as we
25 approach our briefing and listening session in

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1 Washington on February 19th and the 20th, and as
2 we prepare to draft our report on how the Federal
3 Government and institutions of higher education
4 have responded to claims of antisemitism on those
5 campuses, we need the data that the Federal
6 Government has been maintaining on its enforcement
7 of our nation's civil rights laws.

8 The Commission's staff sent document
9 requests and interrogatories to DOJ, the Education
10 Department, and HHS, that have been pending since
11 September 9th of last year, and here we are more
12 than four months later. Now, the original deadline
13 to comply with our discovery requests was in
14 October, but due to the government shutdown, we
15 extended that deadline to November 19th, 2025.

16 As you know, Madam Chair, last year, the
17 Commission voted unanimously to open this
18 investigation, and we did so with the support of
19 a bipartisan group of lawmakers in Congress who
20 likewise care about this topic. Commissioner
21 Kirsanow and I, along with our special assistants
22 and OCRE staff at the Commission, have worked
23 diligently on what has shaped up to be a very robust
24 investigation, much like what we in Congress always
25 intended for this investigation to be. We have,

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1 for example, dozens of panelists presenting at our
2 briefing next month, several of whom have prior
3 government experience. Some of them are students,
4 Jewish students, who have experience with
5 antisemitism on college campuses, and all of whom
6 collectively represent a diversity of relevant
7 perspectives.

8 We've also worked closely with stakeholder
9 organizations in the American Jewish community and
10 in the broader activist community in America to
11 develop this investigation and the ultimate report
12 that is slated to be published in September of this
13 year. So again, this is a bipartisan
14 investigation, co-led by a bipartisan group of
15 commissioners, and encouraged by a bipartisan group
16 of Congress members. Any suggestion otherwise,
17 whether in the press or elsewhere, is obviously
18 inaccurate.

19 And it is very troubling that the Trump
20 administration thus far has refused to cooperate
21 in this same bipartisan spirit on a topic of great
22 national interest and on a subject that it has said
23 in the past that it cares very deeply about. And
24 I would encourage any of my colleagues and all of
25 my colleagues who have relationships in this

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1 administration to encourage compliance with the
2 Commission's discovery request which,
3 incidentally, federal law requires all departments
4 and agencies at the federal level to do. That's
5 all I have for you, Madam Chair.

6 CHAIR GARZA: Well, thank you,
7 Commissioner Jones. We can't do our job if we don't
8 have the support of everyone to ensure that we can
9 do our job. And on a personal level, I'm very proud
10 of the work that we are doing on a bipartisan basis,
11 so I appreciate your comments.

12 All right, so I want to thank the Staff
13 Director, so I guess that closes the portion for
14 our Staff Director's Report and most of business
15 that we have for today, but before we adjourn, I
16 just want to take a moment to recognize three
17 long-serving members of the Commission staff who
18 are retiring. I believe everyone is aware that Pam
19 Dunston, Teresa Adams, and Mark Spencer have
20 announced their retirements from the Commission on
21 Civil Rights, so on behalf of the Commission, I want
22 to congratulate Pam, Teresa, and Mark on their
23 well-deserved retirements.

24 Together, the three of them represent a
25 combined 66 years of federal service, an

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1 extraordinary accomplishment and a legacy that will
2 be remembered for years to come. Their dedication
3 and commitment to excellence have left a lasting
4 impact not only on this agency, but on the
5 advancement of civil rights in this country. And
6 so I do want to take a moment to acknowledge each
7 of them.

8 Pam devoted 37 years of service to the
9 Commission. She served in roles ranking from Clerk
10 to Chief of Administrative Services in Contracts
11 Division. Pam is a living history for this
12 Commission. To serve this agency for more than half
13 of its existence is a testament to her extraordinary
14 commitment to public service and to civil rights.

15 Throughout her career, Pam wore many hats,
16 supporting the agency through periods of challenge
17 and change, overseeing administrative operations,
18 managing facilities, and leading logistical
19 planning for commission meetings and events. Her
20 institutional knowledge, leadership, and steady
21 presence were essential to the work accomplished
22 during her tenure and the Commission's overall
23 success.

24 Teresa Adams, she contributed 24 years of
25 federal service, first in the Office of Staff

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1 Director and leader in the Office of Civil Rights
2 Evaluation as a civil rights assistant. Her
3 unwavering support of civil rights analysts and
4 social scientists played a critical role in the
5 development of many of the Commission's most
6 significant reports.

7 Mark Spencer, he previously served at the
8 Commission from 1993 to 1995 and returned in 2022
9 to become the first director of the Commission on
10 the Social Status of Black Men and Boys. And under
11 his leadership, the Commission produced four annual
12 reports and convened numerous national roundtables.

13 His lifelong commitment to justice, equity, and
14 fairness helped shape policy and improve the lives
15 of Black men and boys across the nation.

16 Retirement marks both an ending and a
17 beginning, and as Pam, Teresa, and Mark begin this
18 new chapter, we thank them for their service and
19 for the lasting difference they have made. So on
20 behalf of the Commission, we wish them happiness,
21 good health, and a fulfilling retirement.

22 So that concludes the business --

23 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: Madam Chair?

24 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, Commissioner
25 Magpantay.

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1 COMMISSIONER MAGPANTAY: I just wanted to
2 say to those who retired, there was clapping in the
3 audience, but we were all muted. So you can know,
4 trust that that was there. I also wanted to
5 recognize and thank Pam for her service.

6 I also just want to recognize three other
7 departures. One is Sarah Villanueva from Regional
8 Programs Unit. They support the State Advisory
9 Committees. I believe we've heard other reports
10 recognizing Sarah. So I just wanted to thank her
11 and the entire team at Regional Programs for their
12 work.

13 Though they are not career, these two other
14 individuals, John Mashburn and Alexis Fragosa, were
15 special assistants. The special assistants that
16 we have and have had work very hard to support the
17 commissioners. I want to thank them for their
18 service. Both of them have been great to work with.

19 We haven't always agreed, but that is the nature
20 of being a bipartisan commission where people can
21 come together. So I want to recognize and thank
22 Alexis for her service and John Mashburn for their
23 service -- John's service, not only for the
24 Commission, but also on the Hill, and for two decades
25 working on Capitol Hill, to vent issues that are

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1 important to the American people. Thank you both.

2 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Madam Chair?

3 CHAIR GARZA: Yes, Commissioner Kirsanow.

4 COMMISSIONER KIRSANOW: Thank you, Madam
5 Chair. I'd like to align myself with Commissioner
6 Magpantay's very thoughtful comments. I've been
7 on the Commission for about 25 years now, and it
8 seems like everyone that you've mentioned has been
9 there since I've been there with the exception of,
10 of course, Ms. Fragosa and Mr. Mashburn, both of
11 whom dedicated themselves to their respective
12 commissioners in exemplary form.

13 But particular congratulations to Pam
14 Dunston, who it seems as every time I walk up into
15 the Commission she was there. When I think of the
16 Civil Rights Commission, I think of certain
17 individuals as almost exemplifying the Commission,
18 and Pam is one of them. Congratulations, Pam.

19 CHAIR GARZA: Thank you for your words,
20 Commissioner Kirsanow. As you are the
21 longest-serving commissioner on this Commission,
22 I believe that means something for her.

23 Well, that concludes all the business that
24 we had on the agenda for today's meeting, and as
25 we head into the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday

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1 weekend, I just wanted to close with some words from
2 Dr. King that speak directly to the responsibility
3 of this Commission and the moment that we're living
4 in.

5 Dr. King wrote these words in 1963 from
6 a Birmingham jail cell rejecting the notion that
7 any person living in this country could be treated
8 as an outsider beyond the protection of the law.

9 Dr. King wrote, injustice anywhere is a threat to
10 justice everywhere. We are caught in an
11 inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single
12 garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly
13 affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford
14 to live with the narrow, provincial, outside
15 agitator idea. Anyone who lives inside the United
16 States can never be considered an outsider anywhere
17 within its bounds.

18 These words remind us that civil rights
19 are not conditional, that due process is not
20 selective, and that no person should be treated as
21 disposable or beyond the protection of the law.
22 That principle remains at the heart of this
23 Commission's work. The Commission's
24 responsibility to ensure the power, and especially
25 when exercised by the government, is constrained

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1 by law, guided by justice, and accountable to the
2 Constitution. That responsibility is as urgent
3 today as it ever has been.

4 III. ADJOURN MEETING

5 CHAIR GARZA: And with that, this meeting
6 is adjourned at 10:42 a.m. Eastern Time. Thank you
7 all so much and have a wonderful weekend.

8 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
9 went off the record at 10:42 a.m.)

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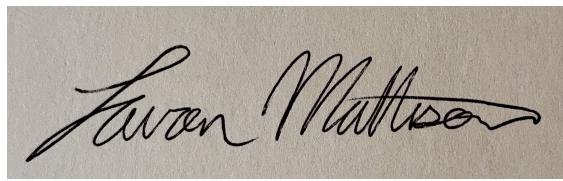
1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2 This is to certify that the foregoing transcript
3 was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under
4 my direction; further, that said transcript is a
5 true and accurate record of the proceedings; and
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9 not a relative nor an employee of any of the parties
10 nor counsel employed by the parties, and I am not
11 financially or otherwise interested in the outcome
12 of the action.

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17 Lavan Matheson
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Court Reporter

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