



NEWS RELEASE
For immediate release
August 17, 2015

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U. S. Commission on Civil Rights announces investigations into racially-biased police imposition of fees and fines for revenue and public education funding inequality

Washington, DC – The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will initiate separate investigations into the alleged racially biased imposition of fees and fines against minority community members as a way to collect fees to support municipal expenses related to policing, court maintenance and adjudication and second, into alleged violations of civil rights laws in the area of public education funding inequality.

In 2015, DOJ’s investigation into the Ferguson, Missouri police department and municipal court found disparate impact and some intentional violations of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Due Process and Equal Protection clauses affecting those living in or near poverty. The Commission’s new investigation of potential pattern and practice violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act will examine possible abuses by municipal police and courts relating to targeting of minority community members in the imposition of fines and fees, including late fees, assessed with the primary purpose of funding municipal justice operations.

The Commission will also examine disparities in public school funding and the role of the federal government to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students. The Commission will also investigate how the negative effects of public school funding inequality are exacerbated by increasing segregation and the impact on equal opportunity for high quality education for minority students.

Chairman Castro stated, “These two investigations address some of our basic rights as Americans. Every child deserves an equal, quality education and our failure to provide it is the civil rights issue of our generation. We also have the right to expect that our local systems of justice actually act in a manner that is just and non-discriminatory. One of the many outcomes of the situation in Ferguson is that there appear to be further injustices inflicted on local communities by the local police and court systems.”

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing a federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about Commission's reports and meetings, visit <http://www.usccr.gov>.