



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Missouri Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Announces Public Meeting: The Impact of Community and Police Interactions on Individual Civil Rights in Missouri**

St. Louis, Missouri – The Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will convene a series of panel discussions to examine police and community interactions, and the extent to which disparities in the use of force may persist on the basis of race or color.

The meeting will take place on Monday February 23, 2015, from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm in the Auditorium of the J.C. Penny Conference Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1 University Drive, St. Louis, MO 63121. The meeting is open to the public without registration.

The shooting death of unarmed teenager Michael Brown by police in Ferguson, MO, on August 9, 2014, was one in a series of events that sparked national protests and widespread concern about police use of force throughout the country, particularly in communities of color. While this conversation is not new, these events have returned the topic to the forefront of national conversation. Of concern to the Missouri Advisory Committee is the extent to which disparities may persist in law enforcement practices that undermine equal protection under the law on the basis of race or color. The Committee will hear testimony from community members, law enforcement, government officials, and experts in the field of community and police relations regarding this concern, as well as underlying factors that may contribute to such disparities and recommendations for addressing them. Members of the public will also be invited to speak during two open forum sessions beginning at 12:00pm and 4:15pm.

Dr. S. David Mitchell, Chair of the Committee, urged community participation: “The members of the Missouri State Advisory Committee and I welcome this opportunity to hear testimony from a variety of stakeholders on the complex issue of how community and police interactions impact the individual civil rights of Missouri citizens. In the wake of the tragic events in Ferguson, MO and other incidents around the country, it is clear that there is a fundamental problem of trust and understanding between communities, especially communities of color, and law enforcement. As the Committee seeks to prepare its report to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, it is imperative that we receive input not only from experts and government officials but also from the general public. The Committee hopes that if you are unable to attend in person that you will take time to provide comments during the notice and comment period for if we are to truly have real and longstanding change then the voices of all Missourians must be heard.”

State advisory committee members conduct reviews and produce reports and recommendations concerning local civil rights issues, including justice, voting, discrimination, housing, and education. Congress mandates that the federal Commission establish advisory committees in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Appointees to state advisory committees serve two-year terms. Regional Programs Unit Chief for the Commission, Dr. David

Mussatt said, “Since 1957, the Commission’s state advisory committees have served as the eyes and ears for the Commission in the states. The Missouri Advisory Committee looks forward to seeing and hearing what the diverse panelists and the people of Missouri present regarding this issue of national importance.”

The Missouri Advisory Committee plans to hold a follow up meeting in Kansas City, MO, later in the year to gather additional testimony. The Committee will also accept written testimony from those who are unable to attend either event. To submit written testimony to the Committee please contact Melissa Wojnaroski at [mwojnaroski@usccr.gov](mailto:mwojnaroski@usccr.gov). The Committee will issue its findings and recommendations based on the evidence provided in a report to the Commission to be delivered after the conclusion of these events.

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

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