



# VERGENNES POLICE DEPARTMENT

POST OFFICE BOX 35  
8 MAIN STREET  
VERGENNES, VT  
05491

21 March 2016

Chairwoman Grad,

I write this letter to you and the members of the House Judiciary Committee to correct and clarify my position on the issue of Fair and Impartial Policing.

On Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 I testified before your committee on Fair and Impartial Policing. During my testimony, I mistakenly made the statement that I did not believe there was any biases in law enforcement in the State of Vermont. My use of the term "biases" was incorrect and did not reflect my beliefs. While I certainly hope there would be no bias in law enforcement, what I meant to say was I did not have knowledge of any officers who are racist, nor did I know of any Chiefs or Sheriffs that would condone any officer who was racist. During testimony, I also explained what my philosophy was as the Chief of Police in Vergennes, VT, how I created an atmosphere of fair and impartial policing in my department and the need for reinforcement of that same philosophy.

We all acknowledge that everyone, police officers included, have some sort of bias based on their background and personal experiences. We in the law enforcement profession understand the importance of addressing that issue and the requirement to train our officers to overcome those biases while in the performance of their duties. We all clearly understand how important it is to be trusted by the communities we serve and the need to maintain the confidence of our communities.

There is no room for racism in law enforcement, nor anywhere else. We as police officers understand the tremendous trust and authority we are given as law enforcement officers. We also understand the need to police ourselves and address any form of racism that rears its ugly head in a decisive and effective manner. Racism is a vile and ugly concept and if allowed to develop, it rapidly erodes the confidence of our community and causes damage which may take generations to repair. As a leader in this state's law enforcement community, I am committed to do whatever it takes to address, correct or prevent such behavior from taking place.

I hope I have explained myself well enough to clear up any concerns which you or your committee may have due to my mistake. I value the relationship I feel I have developed with you and the members of your committee and my reputation as a professional police officer dedicated to protecting his community and the State of Vermont. Please feel free to contact me for any further explanation or if I need to explain further.

Yours in Service,

  
George P. Merkel

Chief of Police / City of Vergennes, VT. / President of the Vermont Police Association

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (802) 877-2201  
FAX NUMBER: (802) 877-1155