



H.492 (Racial Justice Reform Board) Bill FAQ

Q. Where is the Board being proposed to be placed in Government structure?

A. The Board will be placed under the office of the Attorney General.

Q. Why is it important that such Board exist? Don't we already have the Human Rights Commission and the Civil Rights Commission to address racism?

A. The Board is designed to address institutionalized racism, largely as a result of implicit bias. These existing organizations have historically addressed explicit bias.

Q. Why is it that this is so important now?

A. Vermont has had longstanding issue with disparities in the criminal justice system. Efforts are ongoing ranging from race traffic stop data collection to Fair and Impartial Policing Policy and Training.

Q. If efforts are underway, why do we need this Board?

A. The implementation of efforts underway have no centralized independent oversight and to date have only sought to address law enforcement. This Board will provide that oversight, introduce policy and training to address use of force and expand to address all components of the Criminal Justice System.

Q. It's not clear that there racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Is there really a problem here?

A. Yes! The race traffic stop data and the use of force data currently being collected across the state make it clear that we have some serious issues. Vermont is a state with 1.6% African Americans but African Americans make up over 10% of our prison system. Last year The Sentencing Project reported that Vermont leads the nation with one in 14 African American Males incarcerated.

Q. What would the Board do?

A. The bill outlines the Boards responsibilities to be **“Oversight of the implementation of racial justice reform across the State, including within the criminal justice system, by managing and overseeing the collection of race based data, ensuring such data are publicly available, and developing policy and trainings to address systemic implicit bias “**



Q. How would the Board address the remainder of the criminal justice system?

A. The bill outlines additional authority of the Board to **“provide recommendations to the Criminal Justice Training Council and the Vermont Bar Association on a model training and policy for law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, and correctional officers to recognize and address implicit bias, and conduct oversight of the statewide adoption and implementation of such policies and trainings”**

Q. Is there a feedback loop designed into this process to enable the legislature to get updates?

A. Yes. Board is required to report on an annual basis. The bill tasks the Board with providing updates including recommendations on methods of statewide oversight including civilian oversight of law enforcement; processes and methodologies for Independent prosecutors; Justice System complaint process and expanding to addressing institutionalized racism in education, employment, health services and housing.

Q. What impact does the bill have on the Fair and Impartial policing Policy?

A. It calls for all agencies to adopt the entire Fair and Impartial Policy and establishes that the stakeholders review the policy annually.

Q. Where can I find out more about the H. 492 in moving forward?

A. Vermont Judiciary has updates here:

<http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2018/H.492>

Justice For All will post updates here:

<https://racialjusticereformomnibusbillvt.wordpress.com/>