



Mark Hughes, ED, Justice For All: S.281 Testimony Senate Government Operations Committee
February 27, 2018

I am Mark Hughes, Executive Director of Justice For All. I won't be appearing today due to illness. We have put forward language for composition and process surrounding this Commission. Further, we have outlined a legislative approach to address racial profiling and use of force, two areas that most certainly require attention at this time. Finally we have provided an approach to expand the HRC, as civil liberties are under attack at a national level. We have received no indication that any of this is important to the Senate Committee on Government Operations.

Meanwhile we have watched as you enable law enforcement to become increasingly self-governing (S.192); provide additional power and authority to the Public Safety Commissioner (S.198) and place additional law enforcement seats on the Criminal justice training Council, while removing civilians (S.273). We are in fact still waiting to see the response from this body, (oversight of law enforcement in the state) to the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council's unilateral change to the Fair and Impartial Policing Policy, November 21st, 2017 (in response to threats of grant losses).

Vermont spends over 574M annually on "so called" public safety and brags to be the safest State in the United States. Just who is safe in Vermont where we have 4,000 law enforcement officers (excluding federal) and 6,300 African Americans where one in 14 of the males are incarcerated?

If you can't see the relationship here, more concerning is that fact that you just don't get it. And as the incarceration rate of African Americans has gone up now to 11 percent, what is most insulting is your audacity to once again bring someone like ██████ in who has been on the states payrolls for the past fifteen years (with no apparent success), and hold him out as someone who is actually seeking to fix the problem from which he continues to profit. This is less a reflection on him and more a reflection on you and a perfect example of how some things don't change. It is my hope that in your deliberations that at some point you will come to the conclusion that you are a major part of the problem. Either way, perhaps this is precisely what we need as a state to begin our much-needed wake-up call.

As I have since day one, I ask that you adopt the language of the Coalition proposed, sponsor supported amendment and pass S.281 out of Committee as a funded independent commission.

Thank you for taking up S.281 and providing me the opportunity to testify.

Mark A. Hughes
ED, Justice For All