

U. S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

**VICE ADMIRAL CLIFFORD I. PEARSON
CHIEF OF STAFF**

ON

DIVERSITY IN THE COAST GUARD

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 18, 2009

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. I am Vice Admiral Clifford Pearson, Chief of Staff, U. S. Coast Guard. I will be testifying today to provide you with an update on Coast Guard Diversity. I will be joined by Ms. Teri Dickerson who will testify regarding the Coast Guard Civil Rights program. Before I begin, I would like to inform the Committee Rear Admiral Jody Breckenridge completed her tour at Coast Guard Headquarters and is on her way to become Pacific Area Commander effective May 29, 2009. RADM Ronald Hewitt relieved her as Assistant Commandant for Human Resources. I can assure you that RADM Hewitt, while new to this assignment, is not new to the issues. He will continue to route out impediments and seek positive results while endeavoring to do the necessary work in progressing on this vital issue. On his behalf and that of the Commandant of the Coast Guard, ADM Thad Allen, it is my pleasure to appear before you today.

Mr. Chairman, the Coast Guard recognizes that improving workforce diversity is an imperative. The Service remains committed to building and sustaining an organizational climate that embraces the potential and enhances contributions of all employees by promoting inclusion, equity and respect. Although not much time has elapsed since our most recent appearance in April, I do want you to know we are taking aggressive action to promote the full awareness of -- and full and equal access to -- the entire spectrum of Coast Guard opportunities for our officers, enlisted members, civilians, and Reservists. We truly want every American to know these opportunities exist and we're working to provide a culturally, racially and experientially diverse workforce. Coast Guard leadership remains ever vigilant in identifying and removing any and all barriers to civilian employment and/or advancement. Our chartered "MD-715 Team" will bridge Civil Rights, Equal Employment Opportunity programs and all Human Resource efforts related to diversity, recruiting, retention, career development and command climate. The team will ensure the annual MD-715 submission cycle identifies barriers to equal access and will track progress on eliminating those barriers for civilian employees. We will also institutionalize a similar process for our military members. I'd like to share with you the progress we have made in our outreach activities, and other actions we are taking to improve the diversity of our total workforce.

We have established a clear and distinct vision, as one must know the destination before embarking on the journey. Our vision is actually remarkably simple -- "Recruit, Retain, and Support a ready, capable, diverse, and high-quality military and civilian workforce." We continue to rely on forecasted national demographic data and racial and ethnicity projections as our guide for measuring our workforce recruiting and retention progress and increasing workforce diversity. We will continue to make the necessary corrections to make progress toward achieving a level of workforce diversity that is consistent with national demographic data.

Our actions are based on the following five strategic principles: 1) Improve Leadership Accountability; 2) Maximize Communications; 3) Expand Outreach; 4) Enhance Career Development; and, 5) Leverage Training and Education. I would like to use that the framework as the structure of my testimony.

Improve Leadership Accountability. The commitment of senior leadership remains vital to the success of our diversity efforts. Action and accountability starts at the top. ADM Thad Allen continues to be our leader on diversity initiatives. In FY2009, he re-directed an additional \$1.7M to fund enhanced diversity initiatives. These additional resources have enabled us, among other

things, to enhance outreach to Native Alaskans, send more minority officers to participate in national level affinity group conferences that are critical to career development and advancement, and increase outreach activities at Historically Black Colleges and Universities through our “Ambassador’s Program”.

Senior leadership is visibly and actively engaged in these initiatives. Our Flag and Senior Executive Service members have personally committed to participating in affinity group national conferences. Many attended the recent Association of Naval Service Officers Annual Conference in San Diego, and I fully expect similar representation at the upcoming conferences being held by the National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) in July and Women in the Sea Services Association in June. Our senior executives are also involved with civilian-related affinity groups and will be attending the Blacks in Government event and the National Association of African-Americans in the Department of Homeland Security training conference in New Orleans later this year. We are actively engaged in these events - providing speakers, serving on panels, and participating in “one-on-one” mentoring and counseling sessions.

Additionally, Rear Admirals Hewitt and Breckenridge co-hosted a landmark diversity forum on May 29, 2009 at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, DC. The “Championing Diversity Leadership Roundtable” brought together national leaders in the field of human resources and diversity to share perspectives and insights regarding workplace climate improvement initiatives. Roundtable panelists in attendance included: Ms Harriet Fulbright (J. William and Harriet Fulbright Center), Mr. John Palguta (National Partnerships for Public Service), Ms. Christina Cabellero (Dialogue on Diversity), Ms. Catherine Smith (National Diversity Best Practices), Lynn Gardner-Heffron (Diversity Spectrum), Ms. Grace Rivera-Oven (Television Host), and Ms. Maria Morukian (National Multicultural Institute). The best practices that these panelists shared with us are helpful as we continue to seek new and innovative ideas and processes to ensure that the Coast Guard remains an employer of choice. Senior Coast Guard leadership continues to build positive relationships with those who value diversity and inclusion as a business imperative and key to organizational success. Wherever possible, we are working to garner public support and greater awareness. At the conclusion of the Roundtable, Mr. Palguta announced that the Coast Guard was ranked 29th out of 216 agency subcomponents as ‘The Best Places to Work in 2009’.

Maximize Communication. The Commandant’s diversity message is communicated throughout the entire organization. The Commandant’s Diversity Advisory Council (DAC) and Leadership Advisory Council (LAC), comprised of representatives competitively selected from every facet of our workforce, continue to meet semi-annually with ADM Allen to leverage ‘truth to power’ opportunities. The DAC and LAC validate items on our tactical level Diversity Action Plan and provide a forum for a ‘reality check’ review of current diversity policies, procedures, practices, coordination and execution. At the recently completed April 2009 session, the DAC addressed the issue of swim testing during recruit training. We know that the possession of swimming skills by prospects and recruits has been a concern of this Committee. As a result of the DAC’s research and recommendation, the administration of the swim test process is being revised to ensure that it does not pose a barrier for any recruit striving to complete basic training. We have also taken the recommendation of the Diversity Strategy Group that we improve both vertical and horizontal communication about diversity within the Coast Guard. Accordingly, we are developing two seminal diversity-related documents for wide distribution. “Guardian Ethos” cards, which espouse

Coast Guard *Core Values – Honor – Respect – and Devotion to Duty* and are vitally important to organizational climate, will be delivered to all hands and issued upon initial entry into the Service. A revised “Coast Guard Diversity” pamphlet will also be used as a tool to visually demonstrate and underscore that the Coast Guard is working to ‘look like America.’

Expand Outreach. The Coast Guard continues to recognize the need to reach out to as many people from diverse backgrounds and cultures as possible in order to enhance recruiting. In fiscal year 2009, we re-directed \$400K to triple the funding for this outreach. We are also building, and will be beta-testing later this year, a pilot Executive Outreach Management System (EOMS) to track, coordinate, report, and help measure return on investment of these outreach activities. We are continuing to execute our fiscal year 2009 engagement plan. By year’s end, we will have participated in more than 75 events targeting a spectrum of affinity groups ranging from veterans’ organizations, to persons with disabilities, to organizations with specific gender or national origin connections. Examples of those events include the Thurgood Marshall College Fund Conference, the Annual Hispanic Professional Engineers Conference, the Black Engineer of the Year Award STEM Conference, the East Coast Asian American Student Union Conference, the Women of Color in Technology Conference, Heroes and Heritage, League of United Latin American Citizens Conference, Careers and the Disabled Conference, Morgan State University Career Fair, Women’s Leadership Symposium, and the Annual Society of American Indian Government Employees Conference. We continue to assert that these efforts will increase the exposure of the Coast Guard ‘brand’ to thousands of prospective Academy Cadets, officers, enlisted members, and civilian employees.

During our participation in most of these outreach events, we are marketing several programs aimed toward increasing the diversity of the officer corps. One of these programs is the “Coast Guard Academy Scholars Program,” which has a primary focus of academic preparation through intensive instruction in Mathematics, English, Chemistry, and Physics. Many of the students admitted each year to the Coast Guard Academy are graduates of the Scholars program who have completed a 1-year preparation program at either the New Mexico Military Institute or Marion Military Institute prior to entering the Coast Guard Academy. At present, there are 60 cadets in this program, and Rear Admiral Hewitt has approved increasing this program to 70 participants next year. The Coast Guard Academy Scholars Program also presents our greatest opportunity for appointing students from under-represented minority populations to the Academy as over 50% of students in the Scholars Program represent these populations. We believe the expansion of this program will serve as a means to further increase the opportunity for diverse candidates to achieve an appointment to the Coast Guard Academy.

As we reported in April, our recently re-focused College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative Scholarship (CSPI) program serves to ensure greater visibility at minority serving institutions. CSPI has a proven record of attracting minority officer candidates. Of the 42 candidates currently in the program, 48 percent are minority and 38 percent are female. This year’s applicant pool is projected to be between 60 and 70, the largest in the history of CSPI and a significant increase over the 48 applicants in 2008 and the 30 in 2007.

We continue to interact with students long before they are ready to consider entering the workforce or joining the military. While our primary focus is on assisting as many students as possible with their pursuit of educational excellence, this outreach also helps create greater

awareness of career opportunities with the Coast Guard. We remain very proud of our efforts to support and expand Partnership in Education activities in schools around the country, and have been very happy to support the Maritime Industries Academy in Baltimore, MD.

ADM Allen has also directed that Flag officers and members of the SES corps develop and maintain relationships with historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal council schools to make certain that underrepresented students have full awareness of -- and access to -- all of the Coast Guard's educational and employment opportunities, military and civilian. For example, Flags and SESs have established a presence on the campuses of Morgan State, North Carolina A&T, Alabama A&M, University of Texas at El Paso, and the University of Texas at San Antonio. We also have established and funded, in partnership with NNOA, an "Ambassadors Program" to visit schools such as Prairie View A&M, Norfolk State, Hampton, Jackson State, Lemoyne Owen, Spellman College, South Carolina State, and Bowie State. I would also like to highlight a new effort at Norfolk State which RADM Hewitt spearheaded while he was the Commander of Maintenance and Logistics Command in Norfolk, VA. The Coast Guard units in the Hampton Roads area have recently entered into a partnership with Norfolk State University that is designed to optimize outreach and engagement efforts and synergize the Coast Guard's overall civilian and military officer recruiting effort. The partnership centers on internship and mentoring opportunities. As a first-action step in the partnership, a joint committee is forming to identify, schedule, and coordinate appropriate engagement events. The first meeting with the Norfolk State Provost will occur this month. We will be glad to keep you informed of our activities in Norfolk. We are also aggressively pursuing outreach with several Alaskan Native Tribal Councils and planning a career fair at the 2-year Native Alaskan School in Barrow. Moreover, on June 1, 2009, the Society of American Indian Government Employees presented an award to the 17th Coast Guard District in Alaska for their inspirational outreach efforts in the remote villages of Alaska.

Enhance Career Development. Improving diversity at senior military levels will take time. However, we are taking action to ensure that junior officers and enlisted personnel receive the coaching and mentoring necessary to advance in their chosen specialties. Our Diversity Strategic Group recommended changes to our officer evaluation system. Accordingly, since we last testified, we have implemented the proposed changes and have expanded the mandated use of Individual Development Plans to help our newer members stay on track for success.

I mentioned affinity groups earlier during my comments on "Leadership Accountability". We cannot over-emphasize the role that affinity groups play in mentoring, developing, and advancing a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace. We will continue to maximize our affiliation with, and participation in, affinity groups such as the National Naval Officers Association, the Association of Naval Service Officers, and Blacks in Government. This participation will create venues and forums that encourage open leadership and developmental discussions, thereby helping to provide additional tools and mentoring to all of our people - officer, enlisted, civilian, and cadet.

In the civilian workforce arena, we continue to work on methodology to expand access to entry-level opportunities in our workforce. We are participating in the Minority Serving Institutions Internship Program (MSIIP), a program committed to increasing diversity in the civilian workforce by providing fully paid internship opportunities, and will be utilizing 23 MSIIP

interns this fiscal year. Our Flags and SES's have established a presence with minority serving institutions by offering fully paid internships through MSIIP. Currently, 30% of the students of this program are assigned to individuals at the Flag/SES level, including two at Morgan State.

The Coast Guard has created additional career entry opportunities through the expansion of the Marine Safety program. This expansion will provide greater opportunity for new civilian hires to grow, prosper, and reach their full potential. As part of our ongoing emphasis in the Marine Inspection area, we have established campus relationships with six Maritime Academies including Cal Maritime Academy, Great Lakes Maritime Academy, Texas Maritime Academy, State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime Academy, Merchant Marine Academy, and the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. This past year, we held career fairs and information sessions on these campuses, placing 12% percent of the applicants in entry level positions at marine safety-related units by the end of fiscal year 2009.

This summer, we placed several student interns affiliated with the American Association of People with Disabilities. We continue our efforts to utilize the Workforce Recruitment Program to connect highly motivated post-secondary students with disabilities with summer internship opportunities.

Optimize Training and Education. Diversity is a leadership issue. In order to hold leaders accountable for managing diversity in the Coast Guard, we must first ensure that they have the requisite knowledge, skills, abilities, and tools to lead a diverse workforce in the 21st Century. Accordingly, ADM Allen directed the development of an Executive Level EEO/Diversity Training course to raise awareness of these complex issues. I am pleased to report that the first 2.5 day session, planned and executed by Ms. Dickerson and the Office of Civil Rights, was completed in March. This session included frank and open discussions that were designed to help leaders better manage climate issues. We plan to hold these sessions several times per year to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the information.

REPRESENTATIONAL UPDATE

We continue to press forward in our enlisted and officer recruiting programs. To date for fiscal year 2009, our recruits are 32% minority. Additionally, we have achieved a 4.5% increase in female recruits compared to the same period in 2008. The enlisted Reserve accessions to date show a 5.2% gain, and female accessions are up 6% over the same period last year. According to our officer programs data, applicant pools are increasing. The Academy class of 2013 is in the final the stages of the selection process. The Class of 2013 currently reflects a total minority population of 16.5%, up from 11.3% in 2012. We continue to sustain a strong female presence at the Academy with 29% of the new class of Cadets being female. The incoming class of "Coast Guard Scholars", the Academy's 1-year prep program mentioned earlier, will be 43% minority and is expected to make a marked improvement to the composition of class 2014.

SUMMARY

Chairman Cummings, as we have previously testified, total workforce diversity is critically important to the Coast Guard. We see diversity as imperative to the current and future success of

the organization. The Coast Guard needs the best talent that our great Nation has to offer; it translates into mission readiness and execution. We will continue to be proactive and forward-leaning in our recruitment and retention efforts, and will measure the correct path to achieve our workforce diversity goals. Bottom line -- We must continue to do all that we can to make certain that every American is fully aware of the opportunities the Coast Guard has to offer—and that every American has full and equal access to those opportunities if they desire to pursue them. With your continuing support, we will achieve that goal.

Mr. Chairman, we are taking action—tactical and strategic. We keenly recognize the challenges ahead, but we are not reticent to engage and overcome. Finally, we welcome the committee's interest and commitment to this vital imperative.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

Figure 1 Officer Diversity

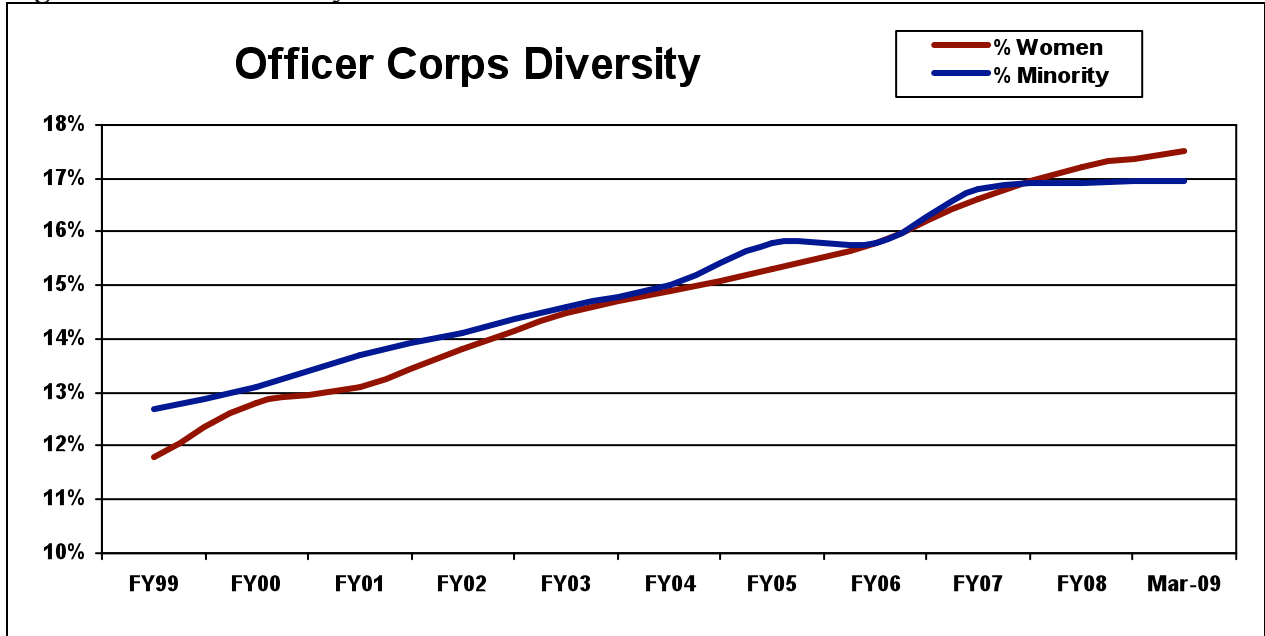


Figure 2 CWO Diversity

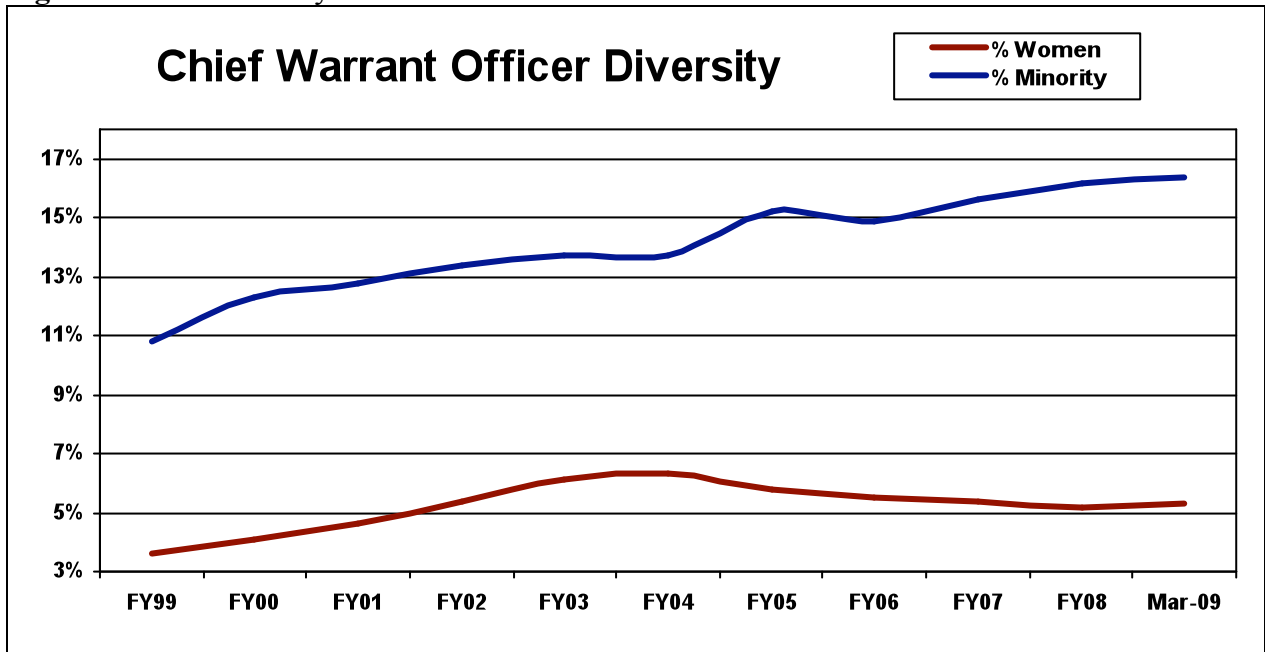


Figure 3 Enlisted Diversity

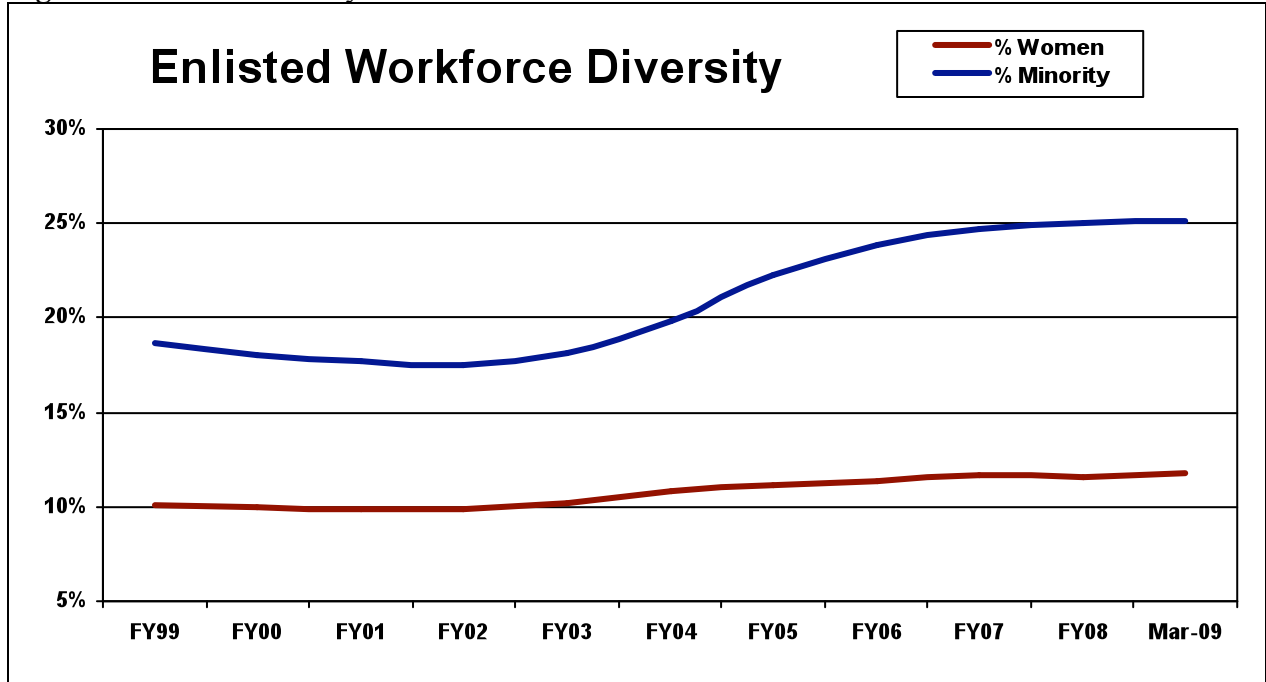


Figure 4 Civilian Diversity

