

NO CONFIDENCE VOTE: AFTER ACTION REPORT



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Members,

As you are aware, The DC Police Union conducted a referendum of its members last weekend to determine whether or not our membership had confidence in Chief Lanier's leadership of this agency and public safety in the District of Columbia. After a long week of media coverage on the Union's position and the city's response, we have compiled some information about our endeavor.

Allegations of Low Turnout

Many of the Chief's loyal sycophants in the media immediately tried to come to her rescue when the results were published. The most common deflection was "only a third even bothered to vote" or even the Mayor's own Chief of Staff who tweeted, "the results are as believable as a Castro election." Are they right to say the results are invalid?

Statistically, we can't say that the 1,128 members who voted are representative of the whole, but we can say that one-third of the members of the DC Police Union are gravely concerned and frustrated with the current direction of the department. That is a more than significant number of police officers, detectives, and sergeants that we believe have legitimate grievances with the leadership. While we heard the Chief dismiss the referendum and attempt to invalidate it, we never once heard anyone in the leadership ask how to fix it, what the main issues are, what can be done to repair the rift, or even how to prevent other officers from falling into this group of disheartened and disenchanting police officers. It seems like more of the same stubborn, deaf-eared attitude from leadership.

The Union can go even a step further to say that members of the Executive Committee visited every district and almost all the specialized units to inform members the vote was being held. We were met with one overwhelming response everywhere we went: "I support everything you guys are doing but I'm not using my ID number to vote, there will be retribution." The question about turnout should be this: What is more likely, that two-thirds of the department are happy with the Chief but were too lazy to click the link and say "Yes, I have confidence"? Or two-thirds were deathly afraid of the discipline from management that would no doubt be meted out if their votes were discovered?

Leadership Remains Dismissive

The Chief said in a 5D community meeting last week, the Chief stated, "I think the 70 percent that did not vote, I've heard from them in the last couple of days, they approve of the job I'm doing". This seems like an unusual response from the leader of a large organization who just discovered that one-third of their agency disapproves of their performance. What's even more alarming is that when the vote began last Friday, the Chief said on WAMU on the Kojo Nnamdi show that she "was taking the vote seriously." But on Monday when the results were published, she stated, "I am not interested in responding to or commenting on the anonymous online survey conducted by the [FOP]". Of course, though, she went on to comment on how she couldn't care less and that we were just mad we had to work on a Saturday.

Last time I checked, the police department is open 24/7, and because the Chief changed the vast majority of member's days off for the whole summer, almost everyone already works on Saturdays. The only thing that she did state regarding those who voted against her was this, "I could sit down and figure out more what they want to do. But if they want me to say I'm not going to change schedules, I'm not going to say that."

Well the Chief should be saying exactly that. It is a contractual violation for the department to do anything BUT that. Union members have always been willing to work inconvenient times and schedules. We are only asking that she adhere to the contract that gives department the authority to change a member's tour without notice ONLY for a declared emergency or for an unanticipated event. It's these constant violations of the labor contract with which we take issue. Perhaps Chief Lanier forgot that an arbitrator ruled in 2009 that All Hands on Deck (AHOD) violated several terms of the police union's contract^{1,2} (which was affirmed in 2013 by DC Superior Court³).

How could the leader of the 6th largest police department learn that 1,100 of her employees have no confidence in her leadership and NOT immediately take action on how to resolve that catastrophic issue? Her dismissive stance on the vote is another example of Chief Lanier's lack of concern for the morale of the police department.

The Reason for the Vote

¹ <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/citydesk/2009/09/10/no-more-all-hands-on-deck-for-cops-ruling-says/>

² <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/assets/citydesk/2009/09/0910ahod.pdf>

³ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/22/court-deals-blow-to-dc-polices-all-hands-on-deck-i/>

The Union is not going to delve deep into this because we have made this point thoroughly. But we must refute those in the media and in the department who say we were just upset because we had to work Saturday, or that we're still mad over not getting a cost of living increase for seven years, or that 'our schedules were changed'. These things may have contributed to our frustrations, but it's much deeper than that. Our real reasons for the action were highlighted in our press release:

"Failure to negotiate contracts in good faith, no cost of living increases, unreasonable scheduling disruptions, cancelled and banned vacation time, bad faith bargaining, heavy handed and capricious discipline, disingenuous reporting of statistics and data, impotent and ineffective policing strategies, disbanding of the most effective units, gimmicky deployment, toxic management, a skyrocketing attrition rate, and an inability to fundamentally keep our neighborhoods, our citizens and our officers safe have all contributed to the fact that our members have lost confidence in the leadership of the Chief. This 'No Confidence' vote is a symbolic gesture of our member's long-building desire for a new direction in policing in the District."

Ultimately, we knew we had to draw attention to our disapproval when we became concerned for the safety of our city, our citizens, and our officers. The *no confidence* vote was just that, a culmination of years of failed leadership topped off with disastrous strategies that are endangering the city.

This is not about angling for competitive pay or reasonable scheduling. We are trying desperately to improve police services as per our by-laws, which state in part,

"To promote efficiency in the MPD and better service to the public, and to advance plans of improvement beneficial to its members to be secured by legislative enactment through cooperation with governmental officials and by other lawful means."

Many have suggested we were using crime as an opportunity to smear the Chief. Nothing could be further from the truth. For several months we have highlighted problems and shortcomings while making common sense plans and suggestions on how to improve service. When our pleas went ignored, we became concerned for the safety of our city, our citizens, and our officers. Our no confidence vote was a reflection of our frustrations and a signal to citizens and leaders alike that we were voicing our opposition to the status quo.

Nonetheless, this department is hemorrhaging its veterans and young bloods at an alarming rate due to the internal grind of mismanagement and constant undervaluing of its employees. If the city doesn't move to solve some of our longstanding problems, we will not be able to fill the vacancies fast enough, causing the department to rapidly shrink at a time when the city is vulnerable to returning to a time when daily homicides were the norm.

Media Bias

A lot of members seemed disappointed that some in the media immediately disparaged the Union. We have to keep in mind that this was expected. It was no surprise the DC Government damage control machine was running on all cylinders. We pulled back the curtain on what many had thought was a smooth running operation led by an organizational wizard. The powers that be weren't happy that one small public sector union was able to show how little credibility and integrity existed in our public safety leaders. Keep in mind that every media outlet reported the same story, "DC Police Vote No Confidence in Chief Lanier." Sure there were digs in the story line and efforts to undermine our position, but we were interviewed and reported on by local, national, and several international outlets nearly all of whom shared our concern and felt our position and data was more than credible.

It's also important to note that we discovered something we had suspected for a while. The Chief's approval rating with the public has declined. Many media elites love to tout that "She has a soaring approval rating of 84%". That was data from a 2011 Clarus Poll. In 2014, WaPo/NBC had her at 74%. The Union contracted an independent polling company and discovered Chief Lanier's approval rating is now at 60%, and that polling was done *before* the no confidence vote. While of course 60% is still a positive number, we believe the real take-away is the severe decline in her approval among the public.

Integrity Matters

Some of the information coming out of our government in defense of our call for change has been nothing short of despicable. The Mayor's office put out an infographic⁴ suggesting that crime is down 50% under Lanier. According to the MPDC Annual Reports 2007-2014,⁵ citywide crime is up 13%, *even* when the equation is controlled for the increase in population. Inquiries to the Mayor's office about this number seem to have gone unanswered.⁶ We can just skip over

⁴ https://twitter.com/TeamMuriel/status/637021811616694272/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

⁵ <http://mpdc.dc.gov/page/mpdc-annual-reports>

⁶ <http://dailycaller.com/2015/09/04/dc-police-union-says-mayor-is-lying-about-crime-stats/>

the fact that there was a picture of Cinderella on the graphic with text suggesting the Chief is a “princess”.

It’s also concerning that the Chief has repeatedly disparaged our recently disbanded vice units. On August 26, 2015, Chief Lanier published a document titled *“Addressing Violent Crime in Washington, DC”* it was also linked on Mayor Bowser’s web page. In the section titled Centralization of Drug Units, Chief Lanier writes the following about district vice units:

“The productivity of vice units had dropped precipitously. In the first four months of 2015, non-marijuana arrests had decreased 31 percent. Search warrants and gun recoveries by these units were also declining. Those were telling signs that we had to modernize our approach and change tactics.”

What Chief Lanier neglected to tell the public is that on October 24, 2014, she issued Teletype No. TT 10-111-14 ordering the following: “All District Vice lieutenants shall ensure that all current and on-going vice operations are closed out, or transferred to the Investigative Services Bureau, Narcotics and Special Investigations Division, by January 4, 2015. On that date, all district drug enforcement operations will be centralized and conducted out of NSID.” Chief Lanier is being dishonest when she writes that vice unit’s productivity dropped precipitously in the first four months of 2015, when in fact, she ordered the cessation of their operations during the time period she is referencing. That statement is patently false and intentionally misleading. Unfortunately, this is not the first time the Chief has been dishonest about the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and its activities. Unconstitutional roadblocks, obfuscating our contract negotiations, botched ERT barricade operations, celebrity escorts, whistleblower retaliations, phony case closure rates, fabricated crime statistics, and even reprehensibly blaming our officers for lack of productivity are just a few of the issues that have been sustained and thereby affected her integrity.

Moving Forward

Last week’s vote was a line in the sand and a message to the city leaders and the citizens: Our department is in shambles and we are on the precipice of catastrophe for effective public safety in our neighborhoods.

The vote may have seemed like an attack to some, but it was nothing of the sort. It was a call for change; a change in direction toward effective, evidence based policing and a call to treat our officers fairly and respectfully. We will continue to work with the DC Council, the Office of

the Mayor, and the departmental leadership, including the Chief, provided they are willing to hear our concerns and work together on finding solutions.

The message to our members is that we're working hard to improve ALL of our conditions. We believe that this city has the capability and the resources to be the pinnacle of policing, with cutting edge equipment, highly trained officers, and policy at the forefront of the industry. We should be the top agency in the nation, not a training ground for the neighboring counties.

We once again encourage you to contact us with any questions or concerns. Our contact information is located on the website, DCPoliceUnion.com.