

Testimony submitted by
Women in Federal Law Enforcement (WIFLE)
in response to the
President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing

Women in Federal Law Enforcement
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The professional association, Women in Federal Law Enforcement, officially WIFLE Foundation, Inc. is unique in that it is the only organization that focuses on key issues affecting women who serve and protect in more than eighty federal law enforcement agencies across the continental United States and overseas. Established in 1978 by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), WIFLE began as a grass roots task force to examine recruitment, retention and promotion of women for calendar year 1983. WIFLE evolved into the Interagency Committee on Women in Federal Law Enforcement (ICWIFLE). ICWIFLE primarily provided leadership training, recognized women's exceptional contributions to law enforcement operations, and created an authentic professional network for women to mentor and be mentored. In 1999, ICWIFLE became a Virginia based 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization, and kept its acronym WIFLE.

Today, WIFLE promotes collaborative cooperative leadership styles within law enforcement and assists in the development of programs and policies that balance the needs of community service and enforcement of the laws. The Foundation educates agencies as well as the public about challenges that women in federal law enforcement face every day. WIFLE members and executives form coalitions with other police organizations and agencies worldwide to discuss and formulate strategies to combat the artificial barriers that exist in screening out women. WIFLE also provides and conducts leadership training, seminars, educational programs and workshops relating to women in law enforcement, including human trafficking seminars. WIFLE develops and promotes research on women in law enforcement in identifying the recruitment and retention issues that agencies need to address to attract more women. WIFLE also developed a pregnancy policy for Federal law enforcement agencies. WIFLE has worked with a coalition of women's groups to change the definition of rape in the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). Currently, WIFLE executives serve on the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Civil Rights Committee and Diversity Panel. WIFLE is committed to providing expertise and guidance to federal law enforcement organizations in an effort to assist them in the transformation of their own particular law enforcement culture.

Today's leaders are challenged to ensure that their respective departments bridge long-standing gaps to improve coordination across local, state, tribal, Federal, and international law enforcement; the intelligence community; the nonprofit sector; academic institutions; private industry; faith-based and community organizations to prevent terrorism, reduce crime, and protect our communities and our Nation. Such arduous tasks will require law enforcement to be increasingly effective communicators, skilled problem solvers, visionaries, and effective

facilitators in brokering and maintaining functional collaboration, the very skill sets that women are known to bring to the profession.

There has been much discussion about the lack of diversity in policing over the years. The tragedy in Ferguson, MO, has served to reopen the discussion about the importance of minority representation in policing but little has been said about raising the numbers of women in policing to effect culture change.

Research conducted by the National Center for Women & Policing (NCWP) has shown that “women tend toward a different style of policing that relies more on communication skills.” Since female officers rely on communication skills to a greater degree, and are less likely to use excessive force, they demonstrate an ability to foster communication and cooperation with citizens, and are more likely to use their skills to more often to deescalate conflict. Further, it demonstrates that women not only tend to be better communicators, but better listeners which enables them to be better at forming consensus. Ultimately, NCWP found that “the presence of women in law enforcement can bring about beneficial changes in policy for all, are able to respond more effectively to crimes of violence against women and, that as their presence increases, incidents of sexual discrimination and sexual harassment decrease. Finally, in a highly competitive and increasingly fractious world, women possess the kind of critical problem-solving skills that are urgently needed to break down barriers, build understanding, and create the best conditions for law enforcement to effectively address its jurisdictional and community responsibilities. Overall, the empirical evidence overwhelmingly indicates that women and law enforcement are [simply] a “good fit.”

WIFLE advocates that every law enforcement agency, in the United States, take appropriate measures to hire, retain and promote women, at every level of their respective organization to a minimum level of 30%. This minimum only serves to initiate a culture change. To truly effect enduring cultural change, every agency must strategize and develop policies that continually increase women’s numbers in the field of law enforcement – it must be embraced as a core goal of every law enforcement organization. At the end of the day, if a Department is truly committed to a diverse workforce, how can we be satisfied with a national average of only 12% women in policing? And how does that statistic reflect the composition of the communities that we are entrusted to serve? If, in fact, every agency were to achieve the 30% threshold suggested by research, agencies would begin to see immediate culture change throughout the law enforcement profession. Imagine the impact on a law enforcement academy class where 50% of the candidates were diverse women. Here’s the case for hiring more women.

Research indicates that law enforcement remains a non-traditional career choice for women—a profession with less than 25% representation. The Nation’s civilian labor force is 52% female and 58% of current college graduates are women. Yet, women accounted for approximately 14% of federal officers with arrest and firearm authority (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2008) and an even lower percentage in local law enforcement. There are reasons women steer away from careers in law enforcement. That is where recruiting and retention strategies come into play.

A 2008 survey conducted at the Women in Federal Law Enforcement (WIFLE) Leadership Training identified the single largest issue facing the recruitment and retention of women is the

inherent “cultural barriers” in law enforcement. Respondents also identified the negative attitudes of their male colleagues as well as work/life issues as their biggest challenges and the primary reasons women would leave their careers in Federal law enforcement. According to a survey conducted by WIFLE in 2003, 44.2% of women surveyed indicated that if they were to leave their careers in Federal law enforcement, it would be due to lack of both support and/or family-friendly policies. So, what are some strategies to draw qualified women into the profession?

It’s all about good policy. The presence of a supportive environment and family-friendly policies, or lack thereof, will not only affect our ability to retain highly qualified officers/agents, but will also continue to impact our ability to recruit women in particular. First, the lack of women at every level, particularly at the executive level, has been proven to adversely impact recruitment/hiring, retention and promotion of women in federal law enforcement. Why? Because it starts at the Top.

According to Linda Tarr-Whelan, “Women Lead the Way” (2009): “A few ‘first women’ are making key decisions in high places...a few is not enough to have a significant impact.” She further states that, “changing what gets decided takes changing who makes the decisions.” According to her research, “the proven tipping point, surprisingly, is just 30%...when women’s representation at the top reaches 30%, real change starts to happen.” She further asserts that “closing the leadership gap is a win for everyone—it brings in new ideas, creates a more balanced and productive work environment, and revitalizes social compact and demonstrable positive effects on the bottom line in business and government.”

It is increasingly clear that recruiting and empowering more women has the ability to transform law enforcement, not because women are the same as men, but precisely because they are different. According to Dr. Kimberly Lonsway: “Female officers are less cynical in their view of citizens, and they report greater support for the principles of community policing in comparison with their male colleagues. Increasing the number of women can even transform the very climate of a law enforcement agency and reduce the prevalence of gender discrimination and sexual harassment.” In addition, Dr. Lonsway’s research into excessive force complaints against the Los Angeles Police Department showed that: “Dollar for dollar, women officers cost substantially less than men in terms of excessive force payouts.”

Although research and experience indicate that women possess the very skills urgently needed to improve the culture and efficiency of law enforcement, women remain the most underrepresented group in law enforcement. We, at WIFLE, know that women, historically, have not been hired, retained and promoted due to artificial barriers in place that disproportionately screen women out of the recruitment process, result in high attrition rates, and lower promotion rates than their male counterparts. The obstacle to change is that the law enforcement culture remains male dominated and places high value on the traditional hierarchal systems as a way to carry out its law enforcement operations and protection services. In addition, there has historically been an overemphasis on upper body strength as a key component in a number of physical requirement tests. This requirement is an artificial barrier that unnecessarily screens out otherwise highly qualified women. Strength is relative. Candidates should be physically fit and training should provide the tactics needed for successful policing.

Research also shows that there is a need for fundamental change in law enforcement from the traditional physical-policing model to a more strategic method that relies on crime prevention, technology, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Such changes also necessitate reliance on analytical skills, communication skills, and “brainpower.” This shift away from a physical-policing stereotype to a more tactical and cerebral approach should be recognized as a potential solution to the challenges faced today by law enforcement – empirical evidence shows that what is lacking and urgently needed is the perspective that women bring to the policing culture. So, what exactly are the inherent cultural barriers that prevent the recruitment and retention of diverse women?

The extensive body of research takes a realistic and in-depth look at the culture of law enforcement, from the barriers that discourage women from considering a career in law enforcement to the antiquated and ineffective recruitment, hiring, and retention of women policies and strategies still on the books today. Research found that by incorporating more family friendly policies, a climate begins to develop where leadership perspectives broaden and the agency begins to experience the benefits of operational effectiveness, mission successes and enhanced wellness of the employees. By the way, these family friendly policies are proven to be gender neutral, showing tangible benefits for both female and male sworn officers.

As an example, the Federal Air Marshal Service implemented a Temporary Duty (TDY) policy for all employees at the behest of a Women’s Recruitment and Retention panel. This TDY policy provided employees with a venue to work from an alternate field site for a short period of time when a parent, in-law, or other immediate family member became ill. Men were shown to also have taken advantage of this particular family friendly policy. More policies like this model should be adopted. Unfortunately, in many cases, these progressive solutions are prevented from implementation due to antiquated views or status quo mentalities. The bottom line is that no department can afford to lose any competent employee because of a lack of vision within the leadership structure, especially when the solutions implemented by particular organizations have proven to be so successful for the entire body of officers.

When it comes to pregnancy, some agencies still place a woman on “light duty.” This is the same status any employee is assigned when an injury limits their performance. Treating pregnancy as an injury highlights the pervasive policies that remain barriers to recruiting, hiring and retaining women. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) developed a model policy for pregnancy recommending that pregnant women go into a “maternity duty station” and identifies duties that pregnant women can perform. In agencies with fitness requirements, individuals assigned to light duty status are often prohibited from engaging in fitness activities. This type of policy is in direct opposition medical advice on pregnancy. Doctors advise expectant mothers that maintaining a fitness regime helps to maintain a healthy, complication-free pregnancy, facilitates a faster recovery and ultimately, and reduces time lost at work. In some agencies, pregnancy is handled within their firearms policies - agencies will remove the officer’s/agent’s firearm as soon as she announces her pregnancy or is unable to attend the next qualification date. This robs an agency of an individual who can perform their duties for additional months while at the same time placing those women in a trick bag and at a

financial disadvantage by forcing them to take unpaid leave because the agency dictates that without her firearm, she cannot fulfill her official performance requirements.

Recently, and for the first time in federal law enforcement history, Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) announced a female only vacancy. In November 2014, 5500 women applied to the CBP job announcement, one of the most difficult positions to recruit for in federal law enforcement; demonstrating that women are truly interested in law enforcement careers. However, even if they are hired, women will face more challenges than their male colleagues will. Many agencies do not issue weapons made for smaller hands, which can affect a women's ability to qualify with her firearm. Agencies and departments order clothing in male or unisex sizes, to include life-saving equipment such as ballistic vests, which are generally ordered in standard male sizes, and does not necessarily meet the contour of women's bodies nor properly place protection over women's internal organs. Women in law enforcement know what size they wear in men's boots, pants, and shirts while their male colleagues would never even be expected to know or even guess at their size in women's clothing.

It is also important to look at some of the more successful Police Chiefs in the country and what have they done to result in their success. Metropolitan Police Chief Kathy L. Lanier is well respected by her colleagues as a highly effective leader, achieving many successes to include a 50-year low in homicide rates. Chief Lanier has distinguished herself with a leadership style of collaboration and effective communication. She has utilized her outstanding communication skills and collaborative leadership style, resulting in close working relationships with her local, state and federal colleagues, her officers and, most importantly establishing "trust" with the Washington, D.C. community. According to an NBC4/Washington Post/Marist Poll (Washington Post, September 14, 2014), Chief Lanier earned a 75% approval rating of all registered voters. It should be noted that she has been able to achieve this extraordinarily high approval rating through a third mayoral administration and earned this trust with the predominately black D.C. communities. Chief Lanier serves as a role model for women and men in law enforcement and has distinguished herself with a leadership style of collaboration and communication. She is an extraordinary leader, in the most politically charged city in the U.S., and a testament and example of the aforementioned research and experience cited.

Another highly successful Police Chief is Michael C. Koval, of the Madison, WI Police Department. Chief Koval just surpassed his goal of a diverse work force with over 30% women. Chief Koval is one of the first police chiefs to achieve hiring in excess of 30% women without a lawsuit or consent decree. He was able to accomplish his hiring goals through the identification of best recruitment practices, including his personal unconditional support to the development and implementation of an effective recruitment and hiring strategy. As such, he conducted a comprehensive review of the Department's recruitment strategy and hiring practices to identify artificial barriers keeping women at a disproportionately low number. In addition, he implemented a strong gender and sexual orientation program, identified recruitment locations to enhance probability of attracting qualified female candidates, implemented a non-residential academy in order to eliminate a paramilitary/military environment, and implemented a host of family friendly policies. He assigned a one on one mentor for every recruit.

He also conducted an assessment of physical requirements for the police officer position by instituting requirements and testing for job-related tasks, only. He also established academic testing for problem solving, judgment and communication.

Hiring more women into policing is good economics. According to the National Women's Law Center, women make approximately \$0.78 on the dollar to their male counterparts. Further, women of color make even less than the national average with African American/Black women making \$0.64 on a dollar and Hispanic women make \$0.56 on the dollar. Research shows that women often experience economic set backs due to divorce, single parenting and lower wages. Law enforcement positions are equal pay positions where women make the same salary and benefits as men. Hiring more women into policing raises the status of women and the communities we serve. What greater impact can we have on a community than to bring women into economic stability for themselves and their families?

In summary, WIFLE's top priority is to increase the percentage of well-qualified, diverse women at all levels in every law enforcement agency in the United States. There is nothing more important to the future of law enforcement than today's recruitment, retention and promotion of women. Until we collectively change the culture of law enforcement, by increasing gender diversity, we will continue to experience issues of excessive force, racial profiling, and lost trust between law enforcement and the communities we serve. To harness the varying skills that and talents that women bring to the profession is to enhance the effective and positive responses within the communities we serve and should be a top priority of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

WIFLE stands ready to support and assistant the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing initiatives. Further information about WIFLE can be found at wifle@comcast.net.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue.

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