



Homeland
Security

Office for Civil Rights and
Civil Liberties (CRCL)
Newsletter, Sept. 2010 (Issue #1)

Message from the Officer



It is my privilege to serve as the DHS Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) and in that role to work with communities across America on the homeland security project we share: to create a safe and secure homeland in which the liberties of all Americans are assured as the means by which we interact with the world—through travel, lawful immigration, trade, commerce, and exchange—are secured. DHS's mission is to ensure that our Nation remains a place where the American way of life can thrive. And this Office's piece of

that mission is to ensure that civil rights and civil liberties are not diminished as DHS carries out its varied activities.

I write this message on the ninth September 11 since 2001—as you know, a national day of mourning and remembrance. There is no more important day for us, at DHS and in communities across America, to remember real American values; to keep in mind that the American values that are such a vital part of what makes our Nation great include the values of equality, religious freedom, fairness, and sturdy independence combined with mutual tolerance.

I hope this inaugural edition of my office's newsletter is informative to you, and encourage you to contact us if you have a civil rights or civil liberties complaint to share.

Margo Schlanger, September 11, 2010

About this Newsletter

This is the first of CRCL's new monthly newsletters. Our goal is to inform members of the public about the Office's activities, including how to make complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We will distribute our newsletters via an email list, post them on our website (www.dhs.gov/crcl), and make them available to community groups for redistribution. If you are receiving this newsletter by either of the latter two methods and would like to receive this newsletter via email, please send a request to join our distribution list: crcloutreach@dhs.gov. If you are on that list, but no longer wish to receive it, let us know the same way.

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We hope this newsletter will be informative and helpful. If you have suggestions, we'd love to get them. Email crcloutreach@dhs.gov.

Ongoing Enhancements to Department Civil Rights Complaints Processes

By statute, CRCL receives and investigates complaints of violations of civil rights and civil liberties related to DHS activities. If you or someone you know has a complaint, you can get more information at www.dhs.gov/crcl. Complaints may be filed by email, over the phone, or by letter (although it takes several weeks for us to receive regular mail); we have ready interpretation services if the person making the complaint does not speak English. Over the past several months, our Compliance Branch has been working to improve our complaints processes. In recent months, CRCL consulted with various government entities, nongovernmental organizations, and community leaders to identify steps to improve complaints review, investigation, and other processes. We will report on changes in these newsletters as they are rolled out. Already, we have improved communication with and confidentiality for those who make complaints, access to interpretation services, and timeliness in dealing with urgent matters. Coming soon: a new (optional) complaint form, in many languages, and a written explanation of all DHS complaint processes.

Anti-Discrimination Obligations for Agencies and Organizations that Receive DHS Financial Support, and Limited English Proficiency Guidance

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its regulations, recipients of federal financial assistance—for example, governmental or nonprofit agencies that receive grants—are forbidden to conduct their programs in a way that has the effect of subjecting persons to discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. CRCL is working to deepen DHS's technical assistance and support to our grant recipients and partners, to help them comply fully with their Title VI obligations. We also accept and investigate complaints of violations.

We have been working, especially, on issues relating to non-English speakers. Long-standing interpretations of the law and regulations mandate reasonable steps to offer foreign language assistance if necessary to provide meaningful access to persons whose English proficiency is limited. This requirement has existed for years—but in order to assist the thousands of agencies and organizations that receive financial support from the Department to comply, we drafted Guidance. It was published for comment in June 2010 in the Federal Register; in July, CRCL received numerous comments from interested non-governmental organizations, and we are working diligently to finalize the Guidance. More information is available [here](#); and news of the final Guidance will be in this newsletter in the future.

Expanded Community Engagement and Outreach

Public engagement with diverse American communities plays a key role in the DHS mission to protect America while preserving our freedoms. CRCL's Community Engagement Section leads CRCL's continuing work in this area, in collaboration with other DHS and Federal personnel. In many dozens of events each year, the Community Engagement Section provides communities with solid information about DHS programs, brings back into the policymaking process on-the-ground concerns about civil rights and civil liberties, and assists in establishing and deepening routine channels of communication between communities and DHS offices.

We are hard at work expanding our engagement program, building a strong stakeholder network of community-based organizations across the country—this newsletter is a part of that effort. This enhanced network will allow stakeholders greater insight and input into Department plans and programs. (Recently, for example, non-governmental organizations provided invaluable feedback about the Department's Limited English Proficiency guidance to federally supported programs as well as about CRCL's complaints process.) Just last week, we ran a conference call with 30-plus community leaders bringing together DHS, DOJ, and FBI officials to offer guidance on federal responses and resources related to hate crimes against those believed to be Muslim. In-person meeting play a crucial role, as well. Last month, CRCL Officer Margo Schlanger traveled to Detroit; New York; and Los Angeles to meet with community groups, raise awareness about

CRCL's mission and functions, and get feedback about civil rights concerns. Staff did a dozen other similar trips. This coming month, meetings are lined up in Boston, Washington DC metro area, Seattle, Atlanta, San Jose, Columbus, Cleveland, Nashville, Chicago, and San Francisco metro area.

CRCL's Mission Statement

The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties supports the Department of Homeland Security as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.

CRCL is involved in all of the Department's missions and performs four key functions to integrate civil rights and civil liberties into Department activities:

- Advising Department leadership, personnel, and partners about civil rights and civil liberties issues, ensuring respect for civil rights and civil liberties in policy decisions and implementation of those decisions.
- Communicating with individuals and communities whose civil rights and civil liberties may be affected by Department activities, informing them about policies and avenues of redress, and promoting appropriate attention within the Department to their experiences and concerns.
- Investigating and resolving civil rights and civil liberties complaints filed by the public.
- Leading the Department's equal employment opportunity programs and promoting personnel diversity and merit system principles.

Contact Us

For more information about the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, visit our website, at www.dhs.gov/crcl, or contact us at crcloutreach@dhs.gov.



DHS Officials meeting with community members in Washington, DC