

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
AFRICAN-AMERICAN
AFFAIRS COMMISSION

1999
ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION STATEMENT

To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well being of the African-American Community in the State of Connecticut through advocacy, information sharing, cultural awareness, community networking and influencing legislation.

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BACKGROUND

The African-American Affairs Commission (**AAAC**) is a semi-autonomous agency of the State of Connecticut, established in 1997 by action of the Legislature and by approval of the Governor. The **AAAC** derives its authority from Public Act No. 97-11, Section 24 and, for purpose of administration, the agency reports to the Legislative Management Committee of the General Assembly.

The creation of the **AAAC** was precipitated by the Connecticut African-American Male Task Force (**CAAMTF**), which was established in 1993 by Public Act No. 93-411. The **CAAMTF** was formed due to an increasing awareness of the socio-economic disadvantages faced by African-American males in America. Recommendations were made to empower Connecticut's African-American community by attacking impediments to social and economic development. Foremost among the recommendations was the establishment of the **AAAC**.

The specific charge of the Commission is to:

- Review and comment on any proposed state legislation and regulations that would affect the African-American population in the state;
- Advise and provide information to the Governor on the state's policies concerning African-American communities;
- Advise the Governor concerning the coordination and administration of state programs serving the African-American population;
- Maintain a liaison between African-American communities and governmental entities;
- Encourage African-American representation at all levels of state government, including state boards and commissions;
- Secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of the African-American population of the state; and
- Prepare and submit to the Governor an annual report concerning its activities with any appropriate recommendations concerning the African-American population in the state.

As defined by Section 2-121, Chapter 23e of the Connecticut General Statutes:

Commission meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month in the Legislative Office Building, Room 2600, in Hartford, Connecticut. Meetings are open to the public and begin at 5:30 PM.

COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES

Trude Mero, Chairperson (*Children & Youth Development Member*)

Ms. Mero attended Georgian Court College in Lakewood, New Jersey. A longtime resident of the City of Hartford, Ms. Mero was born and raised in Denmark, South



Carolina. Currently retired, she has served as an executive assistant to four former Connecticut Governors including: John Dempsey (1961-1971), Thomas J. Meskill (1971-1975), Ella T. Grasso (1975-1980), and William A. O'Neill (1980-1991). A recipient of the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce Leadership Award, she also served as an incorporator for Hartford Hospital and former Chair of the Democratic Town Committee (Hartford). In addition to her AAAC responsibilities, Ms. Mero serves other organizations, including the Greater Hartford Progressive Democratic Women's Club (President), the Advisory Board for the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, the Metropolitan District

Commission (Chair), NAACP and North Hartford Partnership Economic Development. Ms. Mero is also a member of Faith Congregational Church in Hartford. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, Senate President Pro Tempore, Kevin Sullivan, reappointed Ms. Mero to the AAAC in 1999.

Lillie Crosby, Vice-Chairperson (*Environmental Member*)

Mrs. Crosby of Monroe is a retired executive of the Southern New England Telecommunications Corporation (SNET). She attended Waterbury Public Schools and holds a Bachelors of Science degree from Teikyo Post University, where she majored in



Business Office Management and Administration. She also holds a Masters of Science degree in Health and Human Services from the University of Bridgeport. Mrs. Crosby was also a Minority Fellow with the Connecticut Community Technical Colleges Minority Fellowship Program. She has served as a Commissioner of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission. A longtime political activist, she has served on the Monroe Board of Finance, as Secretary of the Monroe Republican Town Committee, the co-chair of the first Connecticut chapter of the National Political Congress of Black Women, Inc. (NPCBW), and as the co-chair of

Education and Training for the Greater Waterbury Chapter of NPCBW. She currently serves on the Advisory Council for Connecticut Displaced Homemakers, is a member of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women's Congressional District Advisory Council (4th District), and is the political action chair for the Greater Waterbury Chapter of the NAACP. Mrs. Crosby, first appointed to the Commission in 1998, was reappointed by Senate Minority Leader M. Adela Eads in 1999.

Larry E. Reynolds (*Public Safety*)



Mr. Reynolds of West Hartford was born in Cleveland, Ohio and grew up in Hartford, Connecticut. A longtime Hartford Police Officer, Mr. Reynolds formerly served as President of the Hartford Police Union. He is a founding member of the Connecticut Coalition of Police Officers (CCOP), serves as the Chairman for the Personnel Board of the City of Hartford; and also served as Chairman of the Trustee Board for the Hartford Guardians. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, Mr. Reynolds was reappointed to the AAAC by Speaker of the House Moira Lyons in 1999.

Calvin Dixon (*Treasurer Public Member*)



Mr. Dixon of Bloomfield graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Tufts University. He currently works as a Worker's Compensation Claim Specialist for RSKCO, the claims handling division for Continental National American Insurance Company (CNA), located in Farmington, Connecticut. Prior to working for CNA, Mr. Dixon was employed by Travelers Insurance Corporation in its Internal Audit Department. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, Mr. Dixon was reappointed to the AAAC in 1999

Mustafa Abdul-Salaam (*Human Services Member*)

Mr. Abdul-Salaam holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Anthropology from the University of Connecticut where he served as captain of the 1975 basketball team.



Mr. Abdul-Salaam also holds a Masters in Urban Management/Economic Development from Southern Connecticut State University. He has served in a variety of economic and community development positions in both New Haven and Hartford including; Executive Director of the Upper Albany Neighborhood Collective, Executive Director of the New Haven Family Alliance, Director of the New Haven Job Center, Program Coordinator for the Urban League of Greater New Haven, Inc., Planning Coordinator for the Dixwell/Newhallville Restoration Corporation, Planner for the Community Action Agency of New Haven, and Drop-Out Prevention Coordinator for New Haven Public

Schools. Currently, he serves as Managing Director for Smith, Whiley & Company, a financial advising firm. Mr. Abdul-Salaam also serves on the boards of the Hartford Region Chamber of Commerce and the Connecticut Capitol Region Growth Council. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, Mr. Abdul-Salaam was reappointed to the AAAC by Governor John G. Rowland in 1999.

Jonathan Bruce (*Arts & Culture Member*)

Mr. Bruce is a longtime resident of the City of Hartford. He attended the University of Hartford Art School, graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and subsequently earned a Masters in Art Education. Mr. Bruce is



an active member of the community and currently serves as the Director of Fine Arts for the Community Renewal Team of Greater Hartford, Inc., where he founded the CRT Craftery Gallery. He has received numerous commendations for both his community service and commitment to the visual arts. Among them: Connecticut Arts Award for Service to the Arts, Distinguished Alumni Award for Contributions to the Community (University of Hartford), and the Cicuso Club Community Service Award. Mr. Bruce was a former Commissioner of the City of Hartford Commission on Cultural Affairs and a former member of the Selection

Committee for the Connecticut Commission on the Arts. Currently, Mr. Bruce serves on the board of The Amistad Foundation and the Electors for the Wadsworth Athenaeum. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, Mr. Bruce was reappointed to the AAAC by Senate Minority Leader M. Adela Eads in 1999.

Christopher Cloud (*Health Member*)



Mr. Cloud is a graduate of Howard University (Washington, D.C.) where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. A former legislative aide to State Senator Eric Coleman, he currently is the Executive Director for Amistad America, Inc. Mr. Cloud was responsible for overseeing the marketing and promotion efforts related to the construction of a scale size replica of The Amistad vessel. Upon its completion, The Amistad will sail the nation's waterways as an educational ambassador, teaching history lessons, cooperation, and leadership to Americans of all ages, interests, and cultural backgrounds. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin Sullivan reappointed Mr. Cloud to the AAAC in 1999.

Jacqueline Dickens (*Public Member*)



Ms. Dickens of Hartford is an alumnus of the American Institute of Banking, the New England Banking Institute and Leadership Greater New Haven. Ms. Dickens offers a wealth of experience in the field of financial services and housing, and has been recognized as a top producer in mortgage lending with a Fortune 500 corporation. In addition to her AAAC responsibilities, she serves as a member of several of organizations, including the Greater New Haven Board of Realtors, NAACP, National Political Congress of Black Women, Sojourner Network of Democratic Women (Executive Board), Hartford Preservation Alliance, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the New Haven Round Table (Housing Discussion and Advocacy Group). She has been recognized by the National Reference Institute for inclusion in the publication of "Who's Who of Women Executives". Senate Majority Leader, George Jepsen, appointed Ms. Dickens to the AAAC in 1999.

Constance Green (*Education Member*)



Mrs. Green of Bloomfield is a graduate of Hampton University and the University of Connecticut School of Law. She holds the distinction of being the first African-American woman graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Law, and has been honored by the John E. Rogers Foundation Awards Program. Currently she is employed as an Executive Assistant to the President/Director of the Office of Equity and Diversity at Eastern Connecticut State University. Mrs. Green is a former Vice-Chair of the Bloomfield Board of Education. She is a member of the Connecticut Bar and of Phi Delta Kappa. Governor John G. Rowland appointed Mrs. Green to the AAAC in 1998.

Sharon Ibrahim (*Transportation Member*)



Ms. Ibrahim of Manchester is currently pursuing her Masters at Cambridge College in Springfield, Massachusetts. For more than five years, she has been employed in the human/social services field, most recently with the Health Care for Uninsured Kids (The Husky B) program. She is also the former Project Coordinator for Women in Non-traditional Occupations program, which provides a wide range of services to support women in overcoming barriers to traditionally male dominated occupations. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, House Minority Leader Robert Ward reappointed Ms. Ibrahim to the AAAC in 1999.

George S. Logan (*Housing Member*)



Mr. Logan is a Senior Engineer and Mapping Group Supervisor at the BHC Company in Bridgeport. A resident of Ansonia, Mr. Logan completed undergraduate study at Trinity College, and a masters degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Bridgeport. A native of New Haven, Mr. Logan has an extensive record of community service within the Bridgeport and New Haven areas. His volunteer efforts are mainly concentrated on youth empowerment through educational achievement. He currently serves as a board member for Junior Achievement of Western Connecticut. In addition to his duties as a Junior Achievement board member, he is responsible for the coordination of the organization's Evening Program, which provides high school students with practical business experience through the creation and operation of an after-school business enterprise. Originally appointed to the Commission in 1998, Mr. Logan was reappointed to the AAAC by Speaker of the House Moira K. Lyons in 1999.

Arthur Perry (*Labor Member*)



Mr. Perry is an elected Vice President of Union 1199 New England Health Care Employees Union, and continues to study American Labor History and Law. Mr. Perry, a lifetime resident of Connecticut was raised in Waterbury and currently lives in New Britain. He has two sons, Matthew and Joshua Perry of Naugatuck. House Majority Leader David Pudlin, also of New Britain, appointed Mr. Perry to the Commission on September 1, 1999.

Andrea Scott (*Small Business & Economic Development Member*)



Mrs. Scott has more than ten years of experience in financial management and has worked in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. She has worked with various sized organizations in the areas of economic and community development. Mrs. Scott received her certification as an economic development finance professional from the National Development Council, and is currently the Senior Development Manager for the Department of Economic and Community Development. She is responsible for coordinating the Connecticut Inner-City Business Strategy Initiative. This project seeks to increase the ability of business, government and community leaders to develop and implement strategies for inner-city business growth. Along with her expertise in business development, Mrs. Scott volunteers for various boards including: Urban Bankers Association of Connecticut, Inc. (Secretary), Sickle Cell Association of Connecticut, Inc., and the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, (former Chair and Member). Governor John G. Rowland appointed Mrs. Scott to the AAAC in 1998. She was elected Chairperson in June 1998.

AAAC HIGHLIGHTS

COMMISSION RETREAT

On October 24, 1999, a retreat was held with Commissioners and staff for the purpose of framing strategies relative to the AAAC's charge. Survey instruments were distributed to each Commission member to assess common goals and their overall relevance to the scope of the Commission's purview. As a result of this retreat, Commission members came to consensus on issues of concern in preparation for the next calendar year, and the General Assembly's upcoming 2000 Legislative Session.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HEARINGS

In support of the AAAC's mandated focus on business and economic development, public hearings were conducted in five of the state's major urban areas. The cities identified by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development were Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Waterbury and Bridgeport. Held in April, these forums were created to engage community involvement and discussions regarding economic development concerns. Key findings and perceptions of the public hearings follow:

- Inner-cities lack sufficient resources and support for business development.
- Inner-cities need additional available private sector equity capital for investment.
- Inner-cities need to attract and expand retail activity to fill the unmet needs of its residents.
- A pervasive need for comprehensive employment and training programs that include job placement and retention services exists.
- Community residents and community organizations need community and economic development education and training.

Information gained from these hearings will be used to support strategies to promote urban development and improve economic competitiveness in the respective urban areas.

WEB SITE

This past July, the AAAC unveiled its new website. The site provides a listing of Commissioners, staff, meeting agendas and minutes for the year. Additionally, it will provide access to reports generated by the AAAC, as well as links to other sites both key and specific to African-American areas of concern.

FLEET/BANK BOSTON MERGER

On August 12, 1999, State Treasurer Denise Nappier and Attorney General Richard Blumenthal held a public hearing at the Legislative Office Building, in Hartford, on the proposed merger between Fleet Bank and BankBoston. This hearing was held primarily to ensure that Connecticut residents would have an opportunity to provide input relative to the planned merger. As a result of the proposed merger, there are expectations that approximately thirty (30) local bank branches will be divested within the State of Connecticut. Much of the testimony raised serious concerns about the merger's potential to lessen the quality of banking services for African-American and urban communities. Having considered these concerns, there was consensus amongst key groups that additional steps needed to be taken in order to make certain that viable banking alternatives continued for all of Connecticut's communities, especially those that have been traditionally underserved. Accordingly, the AAAC initiated a joint letter on behalf of various members of the Connecticut Legislative Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, the NAACP, the Capitol Region Black Chamber of Commerce and the Urban League of Greater Hartford, and forwarded it to State Treasurer Nappier and Attorney General Blumenthal. The letter requested that Connecticut require Fleet Bank to sell certain Connecticut branches to a minority owned and U.S. Treasury Department certified Community Development Financial Institution specializing in urban banking. Currently, there are no financial institutions of this kind located within the state.

RESEARCH

BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS

In October (1998) the AAAC took steps to determine the number of black elected officials in Connecticut. After the November elections, the Commission proceeded with its earlier efforts to gather this information and make it readily available. Since no central data source existed, Commission staff telephoned the town clerks in each of the state's 169 municipalities.

Based on the initial telephone survey, the AAAC determined that a total of 78 African-Americans held municipally elected offices in the state. Additionally, 14 African-Americans served the state as elected officials (3 State Senators and 11 State Representatives) within the State Legislature. This resulted in a total of 92 local and state elected officials.

Our most recent effort indicates that there are now 93 African-Americans holding a municipally elected position within the state. Based on the figures solicited before and after elections, African-Americans gained a total of 15 municipal positions. Fourteen African-Americans who serve the State Legislature as elected officials have retained their seats. Connecticut also has a total of six elected state officers, one of which is held by an African-American (Denise Nappier, State Treasurer).

The state also has eight members who represent Connecticut in the United States Congress (2 Senators, 6 Representatives), however African-Americans hold none of these seats.

The total count of all state and local officials now stands at 108. We have gained 15 more municipal seats and one seat as an elected state officer. When all of the elected positions in Connecticut are counted, the total is 7,114. African-American elected officials represent just 1.5 percent of this aggregate number.

LIKE ORGANIZATIONS

This past July, the African-American Affairs Commission completed its study of similar organizations around the country. The result is a comprehensive report on the status of 17 organizations, which have been identified as having a charge similar to that of the AAAC. The report includes enabling legislation, members, staff lists, and necessary contact information. This effort marks the first time this information has been compiled. It will be updated annually by the Commission. Unfortunately, the AAAC's research has determined there are not many organizations like it throughout the country. Several pre-existing organizations are now defunct or dormant. The Commission's goal is to have this research serve as a vehicle for establishing a network among peer organizations to better facilitate the sharing of resources, and where practicable to improve efforts toward common goals, objectives, and projects.

STATE AGENCY SURVEY RE: PROCUREMENT

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 32-9e, the State of Connecticut requires the head of each state agency and political subdivision of the state (other than municipalities) to establish within their agency, opportunities for small and minority businesses to bid on state awarded contracts. Under the terms of this statute, Minority/Women Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) are entitled to 6.25 % of the state's total awarded contracts within each fiscal year. During the 1998 fiscal year, the state's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities reported that MBEs only received 2.22% of the more than 1.7 billion dollars spent on the procurement of goods and services by the State of Connecticut.

Based on this information, AAAC staff conducted a survey of various state agencies (37) in search of information concerning their respective procurement policies and efforts to include minority businesses within their contract award process. This query was undertaken in order to identify barriers that may serve as deterrents for minority and women owned businesses' full participation in state contracting opportunities.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT

In support of the AAAC's work to improve M/WBE success in bidding on state contracts, several states, which appear to have some meaningful infrastructure for improving contracting and entrepreneurial opportunities for African-Americans, were mailed surveys regarding their specific practices. The following states were contacted:

Alabama

California

Georgia

Indiana

Maryland

Massachusetts

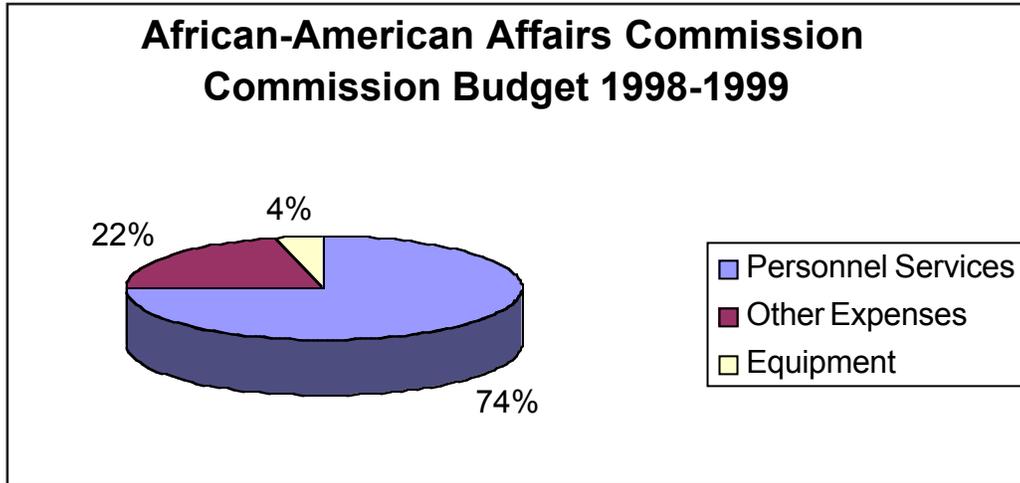
New York

North Carolina

South Carolina

Texas

BUDGET
FISCAL YEAR 1998-1999



LINE ITEM	APPROPRIATED
Personnel Services	\$146,676.00
Other Expenses	\$42,325.00
Equipment	\$7,500.00
Total	\$196,501.00

CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPATION

Africa Business Conference '99

African-American Male National Conference

African-American Monument Dedication Ceremony

Black and Puerto Rican Caucus Forum on Economic Development
and Empowerment

Black and Puerto Rican Caucus Forum on Judicial Disparity

Black Caucus Foundation Conference

Family Medical Leave Task Force Appointment

Fleet/Bank of Boston Merger Testimony

Global Majority Retreat Presentation

Individual Development Task Force Appointment

Judicial Commission Outreach Committee

Juneteenth Celebration

National Black Child Development Institute

National Black Conference of State Legislators

National Conference of State Legislators

National Conversation On Race, Ethnicity and Culture

STAFF DIRECTORY

Gerry Toney, *Executive Director*

Kurt Harrison, *Legislative Analyst II*

Cherrissia L. Mosely, *Senior Legislative Secretary*

Need more information on the AAAC?

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