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ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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September 21, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

According to a recent article in the *Washington Post*, the Department of the Interior (Interior) faces widespread and systemic issues related to diversity and the prevention of discrimination.<sup>1</sup> The article refers to an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) report which finds the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program dysfunctional and in violation of federal regulations.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, that report states that the Fish and Wildlife Service "lacks an effective strategy to build and retain a diverse workforce."<sup>3</sup> As an example of the working environment at Interior, the *Washington Post* article cites a recent ruling against the Department by an administrative judge in a discrimination case. In that case, it was found that a supervisor called African American subordinates "monkeys," and improperly interfered with the selection process for a job sought by a black man.<sup>4</sup>

I am extremely disappointed to hear of this behavior by a manager at Interior, and I am further troubled by the claims that the admitted behavior of this manager has not been disciplined in any way. However, my most immediate concern is the potential consequences that may result if organizational changes do not swiftly take place.

I am encouraged to learn that you have recently appointed John Burden to the position of chief diversity officer, and issued a strong statement to your employees highlighting principles of

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Davidson, "Interior Department still has a way to on the diversity front," *Washington Post*. August 26, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

“inclusion, acceptance and accountability...and zero tolerance for discrimination.”<sup>5</sup> It is important that these laudable principles translate into corrective action.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, with jurisdiction over “any matter.” Under Rules X and XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee is investigating the standards, practices, and policies employed by Interior to achieve a diverse workforce and maintain accountability for violations of anti-discrimination laws. Within this investigation, the Committee is examining specific concerns regarding the structure and functionality of the EEO program at the Fish and Wildlife Service. I am requesting that you assist the Committee’s investigation by providing the following information and records:

1. The number of employees in each bureau or major office within the Department of Interior, broken down by race and ethnicity for each of the past five years. Please highlight any relevant trends with regard to the diversity of the Department’s workforce.
2. A breakdown of the race and ethnicity of Interior’s senior management and the senior management of each bureau or major office for each of the past five years. Please highlight any relevant trends with regard to the diversity of the Department’s senior management.
3. A description of the organizational structure of the Fish and Wildlife Service as it relates to personnel and workforce issues. Please include a detailed description of the structure of the EEO program within the Fish and Wildlife Service and a response to the EEOC finding that the current EEO structure violates federal regulations.
4. A detailed description of any actions implemented, planned, or proposed at the Department, or its bureaus, in response to the EEOC report referenced above.
5. Please provide a detailed explanation of the new inclusivity strategy.<sup>6</sup> Please also include a description of any action the Department intends on implementing with specific respect to each bureau’s inclusivity and diversity implementation plan, required to be submitted by September 30, 2011.<sup>7</sup> Please also include a copy of Secretary Salazar’s “Inclusive Workplace Statement” issued in August 2010.<sup>8</sup>
6. Please provide a detailed explanation of previous efforts, initiated over the past five years, to increase workforce diversity and combat discrimination at Interior.
7. Please provide a detailed explanation of new or proposed efforts and activities to attract and retain a diverse workforce.

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<sup>5</sup> Press Release “Secretary Salazar Issues Inclusive Workplace Statement to Employees, appoints Chief Diversity Officer” U.S. Department of Interior, August 16, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> See *Id.*

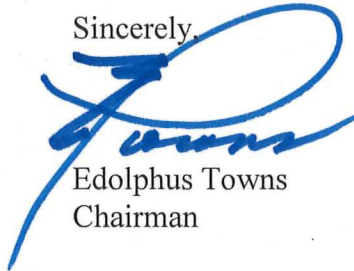
<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

8. What is being done at Interior to establish a culture of inclusivity and zero tolerance for discrimination independent of any actions in response to the recent issues explicitly highlighted by this letter?
9. Please provide a detailed explanation of the Department's collaboration with employee groups (e.g. Blacks in Government) to address diversity and anti-discrimination.
10. What are the duties, responsibilities, and authorities of the newly hired Chief Diversity Officer? Please provide a detailed description of the organization of that office including its personnel and resources.
11. Who, or what entity, has had the primary responsibility for facilitating diversity and enforcing anti-discrimination policies at Interior over the past five years?

Please deliver the requested information and records to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, room 2157 Rayburn House Office Building, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 4, 2010. Should you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me, or your staff may contact Jason Powell or Brian Quinn of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



Edolphus Towns  
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Darrell Issa  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform