



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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First year report on racial profiling released

Governor calls for permanent collection of racial profiling data more training on consent searches

SPRINGFIELD - Governor Rod. R. Blagojevich today announced actions the state will take to eliminate racial disparities in traffic stops, as results from the first year of Illinois' racial profiling study were released. The study, which involved approximately a thousand police agencies statewide, found that minorities are more likely to be pulled over than whites for a traffic stop and two and a half times as likely to have their car searched when pulled over.

"Some of the results of this study are positive, but other aspects are troubling. The only acceptable goal is making sure that everyone is treated equally and respectfully," Governor Blagojevich said. "Collecting this data was a good start, but now that we have the data, our job is to make sure that we take every possible step so that everyone is treated fairly, and that's what we're doing today."

"It is a source of great pain for all of us when the police use their powers to pull someone over, or search their vehicle for no other reason than the color of their skin," said the Rev. Jesse Jackson. "I am proud of the governor for giving this matter his attention and recognizing the importance of defeating racial profiling, not just profiling behind the wheel but all aspects of life."

Data for the study was collected by the Illinois Department of Transportation in partnership with the Northwestern University Center for the Public Safety, which provided analysis of the data. The report being released today is for calendar year 2004.

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Initial findings from the overall 2004 report show that minorities are more likely to be pulled over than whites. In Illinois we estimated the minority driving population to be about 28%, while the overall percentage of minorities pulled over was 33%. However, in more than 47% of the agencies studied, the percentage of minorities pulled over was less than the estimated percentage of the minority driving population. The study also finds that minorities are more likely to get a ticket than whites, while caucasians are more often dismissed with a written warning.

However, data specific to traffic stops by the Illinois State Police show equal treatment between whites and minorities in the areas of stops and citations. The data indicates that minorities are less likely to be pulled over by the Illinois State Police. 25% of those pulled over by State Troopers were minority, and the estimated percentage of the driving population for minorities was 28.5%. Also, the reasons for stops were very similar for both whites and minorities as were the outcomes of stops, with approximately 58% of whites pulled over receiving tickets and 62% of minorities stopped receiving tickets.

The study's most troubling finding is that minorities are more than two and a half times as likely overall to be the subject of a consent search. A consent search is one in which there is no other legal or procedural justification for the search. These searches are based on a request by the officer to search the vehicle and are highly discretionary. Less than 1% of whites pulled over were subjected to consent searches, while 2.27% of minorities pulled over were subjected to these searches.

"We know the problem exists, now let's move forward and fix it by working together," Gov. Blagojevich said. "That's why we've put forth several new initiatives to ensure equal treatment. I also want to make the requirement to collect racial profiling data permanent, so we can always ensure that people are being treated equally and fairly."

"This study shows what many of us knew all along that racial profiling exists and it's real. While some of the results are encouraging, it's clear that more needs to be done," said State Senator James Meeks (I—Chicago). "I appreciate Governor Blagojevich taking a leadership role to help address this problem and I will join him in his efforts to ensure that everyone, regardless of the color of their skin, is treated fairly."

Specific initiatives that are being introduced to address the racial disparities pointed out in the study are as follows:

- Increased sensitivity training for police officers, specifically training that deals with consent searches.
- Bringing in a team of national experts to perform further analysis of the data and to make recommendations for combating racial profiling.
- Creation of a task force of community leaders, elected officials and civic groups that will focus on solutions and implementation of recommendations.
- Making the data collection and profiling study permanent, to ensure that progress made between 2004 and 2008 is maintained.

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“This pattern of the increased likelihood of consent searches for minorities is very troubling to me,” said Rep. Marlow Colvin (D—Chicago) “I join Governor Blagojevich today in his call for additional training and more study of this data. We owe it to everyone in Illinois to take this opportunity and move forward.”

“Governor Blagojevich should be applauded for signing this legislation. I will never forget that day and the crowd that came out to witness the beginning of this historic study,” Rep. Monique Davis (D—Chicago). “Our governor is concerned with protecting the rights of all citizens, and racial intolerance is not acceptable to anyone.”

The Illinois Traffic Stop Study is the largest and most comprehensive study of its type undertaken to date. Data was collected from approximately 1,000 police agencies, including Illinois State Police, county, municipal, railroad, college and university police. Under the act, police officers are required to record specific data about each and every stop. Data collection for the study began on January 1, 2004, and will continue through at least December 31, 2007, if it is not made permanent. The full report and an executive summary are available for viewing at the IDOT website at <http://www.dot.il.gov> .

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