



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

9-S-71

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE FIFTH SPECIAL EQUAL EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITY CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 17, 1971, WASHINGTON, D.C.

This is the fourth time I have called you all together on our drive to increase the minority and female representation throughout this Department--in all grade levels, in all programs and in every phase of our ongoing activities. It is still my objective and I hope yours also, to make equal employment opportunity a fact and a way of life in the Department of Transportation.

You have all been informed of the objectives of this Conference and have already received some reports in this regard. Our primary objectives are threefold--to review our overall progress in achieving the goals established as a result of our last Conference in May 1970. Second, to provide additional emphasis to the critical need to improve the status of our female employees. And third, to highlight the need for special efforts in behalf of Spanish surnamed Americans.

You will recall the first time I called you all together, I expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the fact that this Department ranked 34th among the 37 agencies and departments of the Executive Branch in minority employment. I had hoped that by this time--our fourth meeting--I would be able to report some dramatic change in this ranking. There has been change, but not the kind of change I like. Now, the latest ranking shows that instead of 37 agencies and departments the list has grown to 47. Now, instead of this

Department ranking 34th, we are 42nd. As of November 30, 1969, we had a total of 4,690 minority employees out of a total civilian work force of over 59,000--a minority representation of 7.9%. Two years before, that figure was 4,061--or 7.4%. That's not what I call progress!

Now, what about the women of the Department of Transportation? Our 10,000 female employees account for about 18% of our total civilian work force. The Government-wide figure is 34%. About 8,500 of our 10,000 women are concentrated in grades GS-1 through GS-8, performing generally clerical type duties.

It has been approximately six months since I signed a memorandum calling for special efforts to identify qualified women for supergrade openings. Yet, at the present time there are no women holding supergrade jobs in this Department. On the other hand, throughout the Government women hold close to 2% of these jobs.

This Department has over 1,500 GS-15 jobs paying about \$24,000. Only 14 of those jobs are held by women. That's less than 1%. Government-wide the figure is about 3%. Generally, the same picture exist at grade GS-14--of over 4,100 positions at that grade only 32 or less than 1% are held by women. Throughout the Government the figure is 4%.

At our last meeting I talked at some length about the very low representation of minority employees in our major professional occupations. Unfortunately, the female representation in these jobs is even lower. There are only about 3 women among our almost 8,500 electronic technicians. There are only 53 women among our over 6,000 engineers. And among our almost 25,000 air traffic controllers, there are only slightly over 300 women. That's just a little over 1%.

These figures indicate to me that we are neglecting a large reservoir of talent. There are highly qualified women who, if given the opportunity, can and will contribute to our ongoing program activities in professional and technical capacities. The performance of our female employees who now hold professional, technical and supervisory jobs proves beyond question that they can do the job if given the choice and opportunity.

Spanish surnamed Americans constitute a significant portion of our Nation's population. There are over 10,000 throughout the country, but they constitute less than 3% of the total Federal work force. They make up only 1% of this Department--about 600 Spanish surnamed Americans among a total civilian work force of almost 60,000. The picture is about the same among the Coast Guard military--less than 500 of almost 40,000 Officers and enlisted men.

Fortunately, there are some bright spots. This Department now has 19 minorities holding supergrade positions. Twenty-five months ago the figure was zero. Of the Government-wide increase of 24 minorities in these grades as of May 1970, DOT accounted for 15.

Our total minority employment has increased about 2,000 from 7.2% to 8.4% over the past two and one-half years. A number of significant breakthroughs have been accomplished. We now have minorities represented in jobs and at levels where previously they were missing. We have two Spanish surnamed Americans and a woman in executive level positions and I will be appointing another woman to a high level position in my office in the very near future. Hopefully, we have built up the momentum necessary to follow through on a job that still needs to be done. It is a long way from completion and we all have a lot more hard work to do.

Most of you are to be commended for the efforts already put forth and the results accomplished. For example, minority group employment in the Coast Guard rose almost 2,000 from 6.4% in June 1967 to 10.4% as of November 30, 1970. With a total civilian and military complement of over 40,000 this shows that it is possible to achieve dramatic results in a large organization.

The Federal Highway Administration over the same period increased its minority representation from 7.7% to 11.1%. In Federal Railroad Administration minority employment increased from just over 1% to almost 7%. The Urban Mass Transportation Administration, starting from scratch just three years ago, has increased its minority representation steadily to about 34%.

The National Transportation Safety Board also starting from scratch with a relatively small but highly skilled, technical work force, increased its minority employment from 5% to 17%.

We are making steady progress in our largest organization the FAA. Two and one-half years ago FAA employed almost 45,000 people 2,800 were minority. As of November 30, 1970 the minority representation increased to 3,000. We now have more minorities in supervisory Air Traffic positions than ever before. Some are now chiefs of highly sensitive and important Air Traffic Field Facilities such as Tower and Flight Service Stations. But no one knows better than Jack Shaffer that more and faster progress is needed. Jack tells me that the FAA will hire about 4,000 people during this last half of fiscal year 1971--more than the rest of the Department combined. Jack has also assured me that we can count on significant and dramatic minority and female employment results by the time of our next EEO Conference.

While I have noted improvements in most of the Department, I must advise that the record appears to be somewhat spotty. The Coast Guard seems to be having difficulty recruiting minorities in its First District--my home territory--and there also seems to be some difficulty in improving the minority and female representation in the work force at the Coast Guard Academy. I know, however, that Connecticut College, just across the road from the Academy, recently recruited a dean who is both female and minority.

Both FAA and FHWA seem to have problems in the mid-West. FAA's Central Region which employed more people over the past 6 months than any other region managed only about 6% minority representation among its new hires. FHWA's Region 5, also headquartered in Kansas City, presented a similar picture.

Also, the Office of the Secretary is not without its problems. While FHWA seems to be able to locate qualified minority auditors, our own Office of Audits was able to recruit only one minority among its 13 new hires. We have other offices in OST where additional affirmative action must be initiated.

So, I would like each of you Administrators--and Bill Heffelfinger for OST--to closely examine the EEO performance of your organization on an office by office and region by region basis and report the results to me by March 1, together with the action you have taken to remedy any deficiencies and assure that our established percentage goals for minority and female hiring are met or exceeded in all occupations and at all levels and all locations of this Department.

I would remind you in this regard that Federal policy established under President Nixon and the policy of this Department requires that supervisors at all levels be evaluated on their performance of their EEO responsibilities.