



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

7/20/22

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Amendments to Rules Governing Peace Officers, Minnesota Rules, Chapter 6700. I am submitting a comment about three proposed rule changes:

- I. Rule part 6700.1600, subpart 1, item H**, which identifies the support, advocacy, or participation in a white supremacist, hate and extremist groups, and criminal gangs (hate groups) as a violation of the standards of conduct.
- II. Rule part 6700.0700, subpart 1, item A**, which allows qualified individuals who are legally able to work in the United States but are not yet citizens to be licensed as an officer in Minnesota
- III. Rule part 6700.1615**, which would require law enforcement agencies to adopt a policy setting standards for the activities of law enforcement officers during crowd events.

My name is Ta'Mara Hill. I am a Policy Officer at the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), which was founded in the Twin Cities, is currently headquartered in St. Paul, MN, and has offices/missions across the United States, the Middle East, and Africa. CVT specializes in: providing healing to survivors of torture, inhumane, and/or degrading treatment; educating human rights advocates; and leading in policy advocacy with the goal of ending torture and inhumane/degrading treatment worldwide.

At CVT, I manage our policy work concerning incarceration and policing in the U.S, with a heavy focus on legislation and policy in the state of Minnesota. As such, rule changes made by the POST Board have significant impacts on the communities CVT serves in Minnesota. We are committed to achieving public safety that prioritizes the needs of our communities, including increased cultural representation in police departments, safety during gatherings and protests, and ensuring that police officers are held to basic societal standards of not being connected to white supremacist, hate/extremist, and/or criminal groups. Below I will detail CVT's support of the three previously mentioned proposed rule changes.

I. Rule part 6700.1600, subpart 1, item H

CVT supports this rule because:

1. Involvement in a hate group interferes with an officer's duties by contributing to conscious bias and undermining the integrity of law enforcement activities.
2. Involvement in a hate group has a serious and deleterious impact on community trust, which is fundamental to protecting and serving the public.
3. Involvement in a hate group can lead to Brady-Giglio impairments, which draw an officer's credibility into question and can limit a prosecutor's ability to rely on an officer for testimony or evidence in criminal cases. Brady-Giglio requires that prosecutors disclose evidence that may lead to the impeachment of law enforcement officers, including findings or allegations of bias towards individuals or groups.
4. Without this rule, officers connected to white supremacy or hate/extremist groups will continue to serve communities comprised of non-white people, of various nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions. It is reckless and irresponsible to support and allow police officers with oppressive mindsets and weapons, to be active in communities occupied by the people their hate is aimed at.
5. White supremacists are a threat to our state and our communities. We cannot allow them to have state sanctioned power.
 - a. FBI reports and recent congressional hearings have identified white supremacist groups as infiltrating law enforcement.
 - b. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security identifies white supremacist extremists as the most persistent and lethal threat among domestic violence extremists in the U.S.
 - c. White supremacist activity in Minnesota exceeds any other type of hate activity, as reported by ADL, which monitors antisemitism and bias nationwide.

II. Rule part 6700.0700, subpart 1, item A

CVT supports this rule because:

1. Expanding eligibility allows law enforcement agencies to hire a more diverse set of officers. By extending eligibility to non-citizens who are legally eligible to work, agencies may be able to hire officers who share language and culture with immigrant communities that are being served. This in turn can help build trust between law enforcement and communities.
2. Law enforcement agencies should have the option to make hiring choices that they believe will better serve their departments and reflect the populations of the communities they are active in.
3. Citizenship is not an indicator of morality, performance, skill, or allegiance. Anyone who is allowed to work, willing to protect our communities, complete training, and follow protocols should be able to act as a police officer.

4. Expanding eligibility allows law enforcement agencies to hire particular groups of non-citizens, such as Dreamers or DACA recipients.

III. Rule part 6700.1615

CVT supports this rule because:

1. Establishing a statewide policy on public assembly will give law enforcement, the media, and the public shared expectations for how law enforcement officers will respond to crowd events.
2. Mishandling crowds is dangerous for people in the crowd and police officers. We have seen in our own state that the use of improper crowd control increases violence and worsens/escalates situations. This mistreatment and subsequent escalation was documented in a March 2022 report by Hillard Heintze, commissioned by the City of Minneapolis.
3. Without a standard of practice, and consistent rules of engagement, people's rights to protest and assemble are in jeopardy. For example, as documented in the Heintze report, during the Uprising, the Minneapolis Police Department fired rubber bullets and tear gas at peaceful protesters.
4. The required policy is a direct response to a recommendation from the Ensuring Police Excellence and Improving Community Relations Advisory Council (EPEICRAC), a council established by statute in 2020 to, in part, "advance policies and reforms that promote positive interactions between peace officers and the community."

In conclusion, the Center for Victims of Torture supports these rule changes, because they are positive steps towards building community trust in law enforcement, keeping people safe, ensuring police officers can be trusted to serve and protect everyone without bias, and building a police force that reflects our communities in Minnesota. Overall, these rule changes have the potential to make our communities safer, decrease police inflicted violence, and rebuild the relationship between communities and law enforcement in Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ta'Mara Hill, Master of Human Rights
Policy Officer
Center for Victims of Torture