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Peters, Megan A (DPS) <[REDACTED]> Wed, Jul 1, 2020 at 9:24 AM
To: Nat Herz <nherz@alaskapublic.org>, "Despain, Timothy J (DPS)" <[REDACTED]>

Hi Nat-

Sorry for the delay, it has been a pretty busy couple weeks and everyone's schedule is crazy.

--Does AST feel that it's important for troopers' demographics to reflect the state's demographics, and if so, why? If not, why not?

While no sector of industry or government has a demographic distribution that perfectly mirrors that of the general public they serve, it's reasonable to strive for such diversity. Diversity is healthy for any organization, not only because it earns public confidence but also because it helps us solve problems. It is well known that diverse groups have access to broader perspectives and opinions that in turn contribute to efficiency, innovation and better problem-solving in almost every situation.

--How comfortable is AST with the diversity of its trooper force?

Like most law enforcement agencies, we'd like to do better in this area. While we're confident that our hiring process is fair, we can't hire people if they won't apply and it is in this area where the deficit lies. Our diversification efforts involve a number of strategies to increase applications from diverse groups.

--Do you know if those numbers have changed much in the past few years, and if so, how? If they've changed, it would be helpful to have specific numbers.

No, unfortunately, our numbers have not changed in any significant way in recent years, but it takes a long time to move the numbers in this area and our efforts have been significant. The customer-service focus we've fostered in the last few years has resulted in huge gains in our overall recruiting success and although no significant boost in diversity has yet been seen, we hope it will be realized going forward. Putting a human face on our organization has helped our efforts and that may bear fruit when recruiting diverse applicants as well.

--What steps, if any, has AST taken to create a more diverse force of Troopers?

In addition to being more accessible and customer-service focused, our advertising regularly displays uniformed Troopers from underrepresented groups. We advertise in publications with readerships that are dominated by diverse populations. We recruit heavily among military members, which represent one of the most diverse workforces in the nation. We attend job fairs where diverse groups are represented and have given specific guidance to employment counselors of minority groups on how to prepare their clients to succeed in this career. We regularly attend college and career fairs in rural Alaska and visit rural high schools. When we are aware of an application from an underrepresented group, we make an extra effort to reach out and invest time in them to prepare that individual for the application process.

--What hurdles stand in the way of AST becoming more diverse, if that's something the department sees as a hurdle?

One of the most profound barriers is a lack of positive interactions with diverse public groups. Public safety is a tricky business – people usually call us when they are having a really bad day; therefore, most police contacts are negative contacts. In order to create a relationship with a potential Trooper that results in a job application, we must have significant contact with the applicant in a positive way and that isn't happening often enough. When it does occur, it's most often when someone spends time with a Trooper off-duty. These positive contacts are extremely resource-intensive to create during the duty day. Funds to support programs that would help in this way are hard to find.

--Does AST have any plans going forward to make the force of Troopers more diverse, and if so, what are they?

Our plans going forward include continuing to recruit heavily among the military branches. We'll continue giving extra time to applicants from underrepresented groups and we'll continue advertising through organizations with diverse reader/viewership. As other opportunities to interact with diverse groups present themselves, we'll engage as fully as our resources allow.