
Government of the District of Columbia



Metropolitan Police Department

Testimony of
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***Metropolitan Police Department Command Staff
Appointment Amendment Act of 2013***

Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety
Tommy Wells, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia

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John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairman Wells, members of the Council, staff and guests. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the *Metropolitan Police Department Command Staff Appointment Amendment Act of 2013*. The text of my prepared testimony is posted on the Department's website, www.mpdc.dc.gov.

The legislation before you today would help ensure that the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) has the most capable command staff to lead public safety in the District of Columbia by expanding the pool of promotion-eligible candidates to include talented and experienced lieutenants. With a changing workforce and evolving demands on police, it makes sense to take another look at how we identify strong leaders in the Department.

The Department's command structure currently provides for civil service promotions to the rank of sergeant, lieutenant, and captain. The higher ranks of Inspector, Commander, and Assistant Chief are so-called discretionary ranks that are at-will positions promoted from the rank of Captain by the Chief of Police as needed. The legislation would enhance the quality of command staff officials by expanding the pool of promotion-eligible candidates to include talented and experienced lieutenants. Under the current process in the District, new command staff members are selected from a very small pool – captains make up only 1 percent of the sworn force. Adding in Lieutenants will quadruple the pool of members eligible to be promoted to command staff. This is more critical now than ever as more than 60% of sworn command staff members will be eligible to retire by the end of 2015. By the end of 2016, this will increase to more than 70%.

This legislation would enable the Chief of Police to promote exceptional lieutenants to the Command Staff. These appointments would be subject to the same criteria as promotions from the rank of Captain. Members must be in good standing with no disciplinary action pending or administered resulting in a suspension more than 14 days. (D.C. Official Code §5-105.01 (b-1)) Members appointed through this authority would serve at the pleasure of the Chief of Police, and could be returned to their previous civil service rank at any time at the Chief's discretion. (District Personnel Manual 872.5)

This change is also very important for recruitment and retention of talented personnel. MPD is proactive in its efforts to recruit and retain members, with good starting salaries and benefits that attract people with special skills. However, the average length of time that it takes to reach the rank of captain – more than 21 years in the most recent promotional class – can discourage members coming in with previous experience or advanced skills. Moreover, length of service is not necessarily the best predictor of who will make the best captain. For instance, during the most recently completed promotional process, 30 lieutenants became eligible for promotion to captain. On average, these members had already served 21 years with the Department before they became eligible to be a captain. Time served ranged from 11 to 28 years, but there was no correlation between the time served and the rank on the promotional list, which indicates the relative score on the entire battery of promotional tests. Indeed, the average time served was *lower* for the top third of the promotional class than either of the next two thirds. In other words, there was an inverse relationship between time served and success on the promotional tests.

With such a long career path, top performing members, or potential recruits with extensive experience or skills, may choose to move on to other opportunities where they can advance to upper management more quickly. These opportunities may be in other fields or with the many other police departments that allow for promotions to the discretionary ranks from the lower ranks. In developing this proposal, MPD conducted a survey of police departments to determine their practices. Of the 10 city police

departments that responded, seven allow for members to be appointed to a discretionary rank without having first achieved the highest civil service rank through a centralized promotional process.¹

In many respects, the policing **workforce** has undergone significant changes. All new members of the Department are required to have either successfully completed 60-credit hours at an accredited college or university, honorably served in the United States Armed Forces for at least three years, or served at least five years in a full-service police department. This means that new members are coming in with either more experience or a stronger knowledge base than ever before. Moreover, the availability of high-quality specialized police training is growing rapidly. What used to take a beat cop 20 years to learn, officers are able to learn in theory and quickly put into practice, equipping members with enhanced skills earlier in their careers.

At the same time, the policing **profession** is evolving as well. On the one hand, we have seen a return to basic policing skills with a renewed emphasis on beat patrols and community relations. The foundation of successful community policing is built on strong interpersonal skills. This critical skill can be taught and learned, but many officers have it instinctively. On the other hand, policing is also more sophisticated than ever before, using technology to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. Our Department, like many in the country, is increasingly deploying high technology tools that help us to do our jobs better. As with any good tool, members who are able to effectively integrate it into their work can greatly enhance their performance and value to the organization. In short, with changes in the workforce and in the policing profession, more officers are coming in with the skills necessary not just to do their jobs, but to excel at them.

In closing, allowing for promotion to the Command Staff from the rank of lieutenant not only would support these members, but would support a strong Department with practices competitive with other city police departments. I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you to present testimony on this important legislation. I will be happy to address your questions at this time.

¹ The police departments in Cleveland, Indianapolis, Miami, Oakland, Richmond, San Jose and Seattle all allowed for these types of promotions. Los Angeles, Newark, and Louisville do not have a similar process for this type of promotion.