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# International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters



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To the IABPFF Executive Board and Membership:

As a follow-up to taking some first steps to address systemic racism in the fire service my Congressman the Honorable William “Lacy” Clay of the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District of Missouri has committed to hosting a Braintrust Session on “Smoking out Racism in the Fire Service”. His stated goal in this effort is for us to have a productive conversation with actual solutions and movement.

The Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference (CBC/ALC) takes place virtually during the period of August 31- October 2. Once a date is confirmed and we receive more details I will share it with our membership.

The topic of discussion at the Braintrust will be to address systemic racism in the fire service. Act to develop solutions and/or put policies in place to remove barriers to equity and inclusion in the fire service. Whether they are discriminatory, harassing, or systemic in nature the goal is to dismantle and eliminate racism in fire departments across the country. One of the goals for this discussion is to garner support to have a chief diversity officer with power to address issues related to racism, sexism, harassment, and discrimination that occur in our fire departments across the country. We can make a powerful statement by making policy changes through legislation at the local level supported by the states and federal government by following the model of several major corporations.

The key to us changing the fire service must happen at the chapter level of this organization for the IABPFF to be relevant and effective. We need your support and influence to shape a set of policies and procedures to give us a place at the table. We must make decisions and influence the powers that be that we are here to stay and make the fire service an ideal, just, and equitable place to work. As with any organization leadership starts at the top and this is my attempt to notify you that it is on every individual in this organization to lead on this issue at this moment in time or forever hold our peace. There is racism in the fire service or there is not. We need you to describe what we are dealing with and how you feel we should address it. The momentum is building in these first steps to address systemic racism in the fire service and we cannot do this without your support.

We still need the data we requested on the demographics from your departments, information on barriers to hiring and retention, and the stories on harassment or discrimination claims that have been filed from all chapters. We can utilize this information as baselines for discussions and possible solutions. Thanks in advance for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Addington C. Stewart  
President of the IABPFF

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