

**News Releases****Office of the Attorney General  
John J. Farmer, Jr., Attorney General**

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**New Jersey Settles NAACP Lawsuit**

TRENTON - New Jersey and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and a class of unhired trooper applicants have settled a four-year-old lawsuit against the State Police by agreeing to a plan to emphasize both stringent educational standards and the need for diversity in the ranks, Attorney General John J. Farmer, Jr. announced today.

According to the agreement, signed by the State and both the national NAACP and its New Jersey Chapter, State Police has made a commitment to aggressively recruit a diverse pool of qualified applicants to take the written trooper qualification test.

Farmer said the State hopes that over the next three years it will be able to recruit a pool of qualified applicants who have four-year college degrees and are reflective of New Jersey's diversity. If the state is able to do so, it can then move under terms of the agreement to using a four-year college degree as the exclusive State Police entrance requirement.

If the state is not able to realize its hope within the three-year period, it is committed for another four years to using newly-expanded eligibility criteria set forth in the agreement.

Specifically, New Jersey will now recruit and select State Police applicants who have 60 college credit hours and two years or more of life experience "indicating the maturity of the applicant."

Such life experience, Farmer said, need not be limited to police or military service, as was the case previously. It can also include two years of satisfactory employment that brings desirable skills into the corps. The new eligibility standard is in place for recruiting the 119th State Police class.

The prior standard, in effect since 1993, had required all prospective troopers to have either a four-year college degree or 60 college credits and at least two years of military or police experience.

Prior to 1993, State Police applicants needed to possess only a high school diploma or a GED.

Farmer said he is confident the new settlement agreement will meet the equally vital goals of generating educated, qualified State Police applicants while also ensuring equity in the recruitment of minority candidates.

"We believe this is a very forward looking and innovative approach," the Attorney General said.

However, Farmer noted that the agreement does not stipulate any assurances for minority applicants taking the test. All candidates must meet the same high standards to gain entrance to the State Police Academy.

"There is no quota involved here -- no requirement that the State police appoint or hire any specific number of minorities," Farmer said.

"We're going to go out and recruit the most diverse class possible, then let every candidate stand on his or her own merit. What this agreement does is level the playing field."

In addition to expanded recruitment criteria, the settlement agreement calls for State Police to use an applicant test other than the Law Enforcement Candidate Record (LECR) for at least the next three years -- the duration of a Superior Court Consent Order memorializing the settlement.

In place of the LECR, a battery of new tests has been chosen, including those designed to measure cognitive ability, reading comprehension and math, as well as a cutting edge video test aimed at gauging an applicant's judgment in handling potentially dangerous situations that can confront law enforcement.

The latter test is accomplished by presenting applicants with a virtual version of numerous scenarios -- a domestic violence episode, for example, or a minor public drinking incident that threatens to escalate into a crowd disturbance - and having the applicant choose options for handling them.

Farmer noted that the standard for all entry level testing used by State Police will be that it provide an excellent measure of the potential of all trooper applicants.

To further ensure equity in recruitment and job performance, each of the unhired African-American and Hispanic applicants from the 114th through 118th State Police Academy classes have been invited to re-apply for the 119th and 120th Academy classes.

Under terms of the settlement agreement, any re-applying class members who were disqualified because of the old education requirement - and continue to meet all other criteria - will be treated as invited applicants eligible to take the State Police examination.

The agreement also calls for the state to pay 10 unhired State Police applicants individual settlement sums totaling \$355,000 in recognition of their participation in the lawsuit. The state has also agreed to pay the attorneys' fees and related costs incurred by the plaintiffs, although that aspect of the settlement is still in negotiation and no precise amount has been determined at this point.

Farmer said that recruiting a diverse field of State police applicants is, and will remain, a top priority of the state. Under the leadership of new superintendent Col. Carson Dunbar, the State Police has launched a comprehensive advertising campaign to attract minority candidates, he noted, and the size of the agency's recruiting staff has been doubled from 12 to 24 officers.

On Feb. 26, about 2,000 prospective troopers took the written entrance exam for the 119th recruit class. Those applicants were selected based on the "blind" screening of a pool of about 5,000 applicants with guidance from a private human resource consulting firm that specializes in public safety employment. Blind screening refers to the fact that all names and indications of race, gender, ethnicity and other factors were removed from the applications prior to their being reviewed.

The Attorney General said that, ultimately, the new settlement agreement retains the same spirit of a

merit-based approach to State Police recruiting while enhancing both the agency's recruitment practices and bolstering public confidence in the organization.

"We're convinced we can recruit a very well educated and diverse State Police force," Farmer said. "And, as you can see from the terms of this agreement, we're willing to bet the four-year college requirement on our ability to do so."

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