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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

### **Report reviews traffic stop data**

Springfield Police Chief Paul Williams has followed through on a promise to the community to release results from a third party researcher's look into 2011 police traffic stop data.

Missouri State University Professor of Sociology and Anthropology Dr. Mike Stout, presented his final report, "[2011 Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Traffic Stops and Stop Outcomes: Springfield, Missouri](#)" (pdf) to representatives from the Springfield Chapter of the NAACP and the Springfield Police Department (SPD).

Stout analyzed 2011 traffic stop data, in conjunction with demographic data, including socio-economic and racial characteristics according to census tracts to provide the third-party unbiased report. He stated in the report, "The results suggest that there are substantial race disparities in traffic stops in Springfield. African Americans were disproportionately stopped according to all three indicators that were examined (percent of stops, stop rate, and stop disparity)."

The report also states that the results suggest various factors of the census tracts such as socioeconomic (measured as average property value in tracts) and racial characteristics (measured as percent of residents who are non-white), the number of officers dispatched and dispatch rates, along with the reason for the traffic stops (investigative purposes, equipment, license or moving violations) all contribute to the disparities in African American traffic stops and in African American stop rates.

"While some argue that racial disparities in traffic stops are symptoms of systemic bias, or racial profiling, on the part of the police, it is important to remember that motivations of individual police officers is incredibly difficult to prove using the type of data examined in this report," said Stout.

NAACP Springfield Chapter President Cheryl Clay said, "Chief Williams and SPD have demonstrated an ongoing good faith effort to address the NAACP and citizens' concerns regarding ethnic disparities in traffic stops. One must remember this report is from 2011 data. The numbers for Springfield did decrease in 2012. The NAACP Springfield chapter is committed to continuing this conversation and representing the ethnic minority community of Springfield."

Williams and Clay both noted that these efforts must focus on training, education, and awareness for police officers and citizens alike. As a result of these discussions, the SPD contracted with Pratt & Associates to develop a three-hour block of training centered on diversity and bias based policing issues. During the last year, all SPD employees completed the training.

"The training provided an opportunity to discuss historical issues that may impact some of the community's perceptions of the SPD, have deep discussions about subconscious biases that we all have to a certain degree and the community engagement efforts that the SPD has enhanced under the leadership of Chief Williams," said Francine Pratt, the primary instructor of the training. "The most compelling part of the intense training was the overall commitment that the SPD has in protecting the community, a willingness to share detailed data and to keep us safe."

The SPD has long prohibited the use of race as the sole factor in conducting traffic stops, a practice termed as racial profiling.

"Springfield police officers shall never choose to conduct a traffic stop or other enforcement contact based solely on the racial, gender, or socioeconomic characteristics of the driver or subject. Use of racial profiling or enforcement techniques is prohibited. Officers may use behavioral or vehicle descriptors as elements in a profile but the use of ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status of the occupant/subjects are forbidden and will not be tolerated."

*- SPD Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) 103.1, Code of Conduct, Section 4.5.1*

"The information officers provide related to each and every traffic stop is vital in our efforts to not only comply with the law but to remain within our own policy," Williams explained. "I plan to continue this proactive approach of utilizing all the available traffic stop data and researching it further to educate officers and the public as to what it might mean. I appreciate the work that Dr. Stout has done and plan to conduct similar reviews in the future."

The SPD is committed to working with the minority community, including the NAACP, to continue this dialogue in order to better understand why the disparities cited exist and to working together to develop strategies to address them.

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