



Human Rights Commission

825 Fifth Street, Room 1A, Eureka, CA 95501 | 707.268.2548 | hhr@co.humboldt.ca.us | 707.268.2548 | hhr.co.humboldt.ca.us

February 7, 2017

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
Virginia Bass, Chair
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear Supervisors:

I have served on the HCHRC for about 10 years. During that time the commission has made a number of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, some of which you have endorsed and some that you have not adopted. While we didn't always agree on an issue, commissioners fulfilled our role by recommending what we thought was best in light of human rights, and you did your job of making decisions that you felt were in the best interest of the community and your constituents.

In the last few years, the commission seemed to have gotten off track, and lost some commissioners, partly because of issues around the Brown Act and partly because of personality conflicts on the commission. Our current chair, and all the remaining commissioners, are now working diligently to make the commission functional and effective, and to strengthen our relationship with the Board of Supervisors. We are doing our best to educate the community and potential commissioners about our role. We have held listening sessions in Bridgeville and in Garberville, where we heard from community members about the most important issues surrounding human rights in their area. We have plans for similar sessions in Willow Creek/Hoopla and in Orick, to reach out to all areas of our county.

We have a calendar of events designed to educate the public about human rights and to attract interested, dedicated members of the public to apply for membership on the commission. We have held forums about issues such as human trafficking and we bring experts to our meetings to help us understand such issues. Each commissioner is attempting to develop a respectful and helpful relationship with our Supervisors.

We thank the BOS and the county for approving payment for our very successful resource cards that are in great demand throughout the county. Your support has made it possible for us to print cards when we need them. Our calendar includes a March update of the cards so they remain current for all the agencies listed.

We have been doing all this since September with ten or fewer commissioners, and we are delighted that you have just appointed three new commissioners. Two of them have already stepped up to help with some of the jobs that we hope to complete. We know that we will be able to be more effective and efficient with more people to do our work. Please help us by keeping the number of commissioners at fifteen.

Thank you.

Byrd A. Lochtie
Commissioner



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February 7, 2017

Virginia Bass, Chairperson

Board of Supervisors

County of Humboldt

825 Fifth Street, Room 111

Members of the Board of Supervisors:

Recently, your board voted 4-1 to revise the structure of the Human Rights Commission. The existing vacancies appeared to be best dealt with by reducing from 15 to 10, the number of commissioners. In the opinion of the all-volunteer, unpaid commission, this was the EASY answer, but not the best answer to a lingering problem.

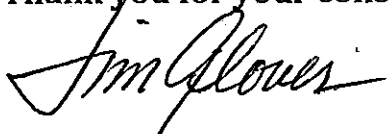
If the intent of the original 3-per-district ordinance was to serve as a reasonable representation of each district, how does reducing the commission size satisfy that intent? Have there been long-term vacancies on this commission? Yes, there have. Have there been people applying to be on the commission? Yes, there have. - The HRC, for too long, depended solely on the county system in place to deal with appointments. We now see that we have an obligation to help modify this process. There are plenty of people energized to become citizen advocates in the current political climate, and we see that WE should be directing them toward the Human Rights Commission.

When you have a volunteer organization with no executive director or staff, potential outreach tends to be limited. With too few commissioners, long-term fatigue is the result. Imagine doing your difficult jobs without three or four staff in the office of the clerk of the board: no one to answer the phones, make calendar entries, no one to tend the front counter, no one to print your agendas. Compensation might become a more important issue. I would imagine you might want to reconsider your service. This is ultimately what could happen to the HRC if you adopt this ordinance. Too few commissioners to share our workload tends to create a serious problem.

So, what do we ask? We urgently request you to rescind this decision or, at the very least, postpone implementation for at least six months. There has been a commission for 52 years so we hope that you will allow a little time to avoid taking ineffective and incomplete steps. We have seen three people appointed out of five applicants in just one month since you last voted on this issue. Just last Friday, yet another application was received by your office. At this rate, we could quickly fill the commission with dedicated citizens at minimal inconvenience to you: a possible interview, a review of a resume, and an agenda item to approve a nominee.

We ask you resist implementing a band aid remedy for this issue so that we may offer an improved system that really addresses the long-term challenge. It is our goal to continue to develop a healthy, constructive, and on-going dialogue with this board. If permitted, we wish to take some additional time to analyze the whole structure and application process and to report back to you. We think with a little more time we could recommend a process that will get this right for an effective Human Rights Commission moving well into the future.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Glover". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" and last name "Glover" clearly distinguishable.

Jim Glover, Chair

Humboldt County Human Rights Commission