



The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties supports the Department of Homeland Security as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.

Message from CRCL Acting Officer Tamara Kessler



It is my great pleasure to take on the role of Acting Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I have spent the last year serving as the CRCL Deputy Officer for Programs and Compliance, overseeing CRCL’s broad portfolio of work, which ranges from outreach and engagement with diverse ethnic and community-based stakeholders; to providing a variety of civil

rights and civil liberties trainings to Department personnel; helping to shape DHS policies; and investigating and resolving civil rights and civil liberties complaints filed by the public involving DHS policies or activities.

While our work is wide-ranging, we are focused on the critical task of supporting the Department’s mission to secure the Nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.

I look forward to interacting with our many stakeholders while serving as CRCL’s Acting Officer. I encourage you to contact us if you have input or feedback about our Office, or have suggestions regarding how to improve our newsletter. Email us at crloutreach@hq.dhs.gov or visit our [Facebook page](#).

-- Tamara Kessler

2012 State of Homeland Security Address



Secretary Janet Napolitano recently delivered her second annual “State of Homeland Security” address at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The address was broadcast live to a national audience via coverage on [C-SPAN](#).

The Secretary began her speech by highlighting the [progress DHS made in 2011](#), for which she lauded the 230,000 DHS employees who work to ensure the safety and security of the American people, and thanked them on behalf of President Obama.

In her address, she stressed that information remains key to evaluating potential risks, and that DHS increasingly applies a risk assessment and management approach to evaluating threats. This is evident when evaluating the risks of travelers and cargo that move through the various transportation corridors. The Secretary noted that “the more we know the better we become at providing security that is seamless and efficient,” which results in “sensible security that by its very nature facilitates lawful travel and legitimate commerce.”

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The Secretary also said that DHS will continue its transition to a risk-based, information-driven approach to the relationship between security and trade in the year ahead. Over the course of the year, this transition will also focus on expanding [global supply chain security programs](#) outlined in the Administration's [National Strategy for Global Supply Chain Security](#), which the Secretary unveiled last month at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Following her remarks, the Secretary answered several questions from the live audience and from the public via [Twitter](#).

Watch [video](#) of Secretary Napolitano's address, and read the [full transcript](#) of her remarks.

DHS Releases Religious Accommodation Guidance

There are many circumstances in which DHS, in carrying out its varied missions, requires individuals to pose for or provide a photograph or provide fingerprints. Accordingly, the Department recently issued guidance for Components to develop policies for accommodating individuals required to pose for or provide photographs or to submit to fingerprinting.

The guidance includes considerations for photographing an individual wearing religious headwear, privacy for the removal of religious headwear, and the use of same-gender personnel for physically assisted fingerprinting. It is important to note that the standards concerning individuals wearing religious headwear solely pertain to situations involving photographs; it is not intended to address other situations where removal of headwear may be necessary for other reasons, such as to protect officer safety or in the course of a personal search.

DHS and other federal agencies are subject to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RRFA), which prohibits any Federal Government practice that substantially burdens a person's exercise of religion, unless the Government demonstrates that the practice represents the least restrictive means of furthering a compelling government interest. This guidance does not address any Component's compliance with RRFA; it is only a statement of DHS policy.

The provisions and considerations outlined in this guidance should be reflected in Component policies and procedures that require photographs or fingerprints. CRCL will provide policy advice to DHS Components as they incorporate these standards into their existing and newly developed policies.

Read the [Guidance for Accommodating Religious Beliefs in DHS Policies Requiring Fingerprinting or Photographic Identification](#).

African American History Month 2012

On January 31, 2012, President Obama issued a [proclamation](#) for our nation's annual observance of [African American History Month](#). Established by historian Carter G. Woodson in 1926 as "Negro History Week," the observance was extended to a full month in 1976.

This year's theme, "Black Women in American Culture and History," honors the many roles that African American women have played in shaping our nation. Watch First Lady Michelle Obama's [video message](#), where she reflects on this year's theme and challenges us all to reinvest in our families, our communities, and our country.



CRCL on the Road, February

February 9 – Portland, Maine

CRCL convened its regular community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

February 13 – Washington, DC

CRCL Acting Officer Tamara Kessler participated in a DOJ interagency roundtable with American Arab, Muslim, Sikh and South Asian community leaders.

February 14-16 – Columbus, Ohio

A CRCL representative met with Somali community leaders; and local USCIC, ICE and TSA staff.

February 22 – Los Angeles, California

CRCL convened its regular community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

February 16 – Atlanta, Georgia

CRCL convened its regular community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

February 23 – Boston, Massachusetts

A CRCL representative attended a BRIDGES meeting.

Additional information, and contacting us

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public about the activities of the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, including: how to make complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We distribute our newsletters via an email list and make them available to community groups for redistribution. We also post information pulled from the newsletter on a webpage, [CRCL at Work](#). If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, want to request back issues, or have other comments or questions, please let us know by emailing crcloutreach@dhs.gov. If you are on this list, but no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please send an email to the same address asking us to unsubscribe you. For more information, including on how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, see www.dhs.gov/crcl.

CRCL Phone: 202-401-1474 • Toll Free: 866-644-8360 • TTY: 202-401-0470 • Toll Free TTY: 866-644-8361

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This is the fourth issue in volume 2 of this newsletter; please visit our [website](#) for information from prior newsletters.

Prior newsletters:

Vol. 2 Issue 1 (Sept. 2011) *Message from the Officer on the 10th Anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001 • DHS Remembers 9/11 • September is National Preparedness Month • CRCL Attends Iftar Dinners During Ramadan • Detroit Community Celebrates 10 Years of Building BRIDGES*

Vol. 2 Issue 2 (Oct. 2011) *Guest Message from Alice Hill • New Training Guidance on CVE • CRCL Expands Community Engagement in 2011 • CRCL Submits Annual and Quarterly Reports to Congress • Disability Employment Awareness Month • Hispanic Heritage Month*

Vol. 3 Issue 3 (Jan. 2012) *Farewell Message from Officer Margo Schlanger • DHS Issues Draft Environmental Justice Strategy for Public Comment • CRCL Participates in Civil Rights Listening Session • CRCL Launches a Facebook Page • ICE Announces New Hotline and Detainer Form for Immigrant Detainees • ICC Distributes Federal Survey Regarding 2011 East Coast Earthquake • White House Releases Strategic Implementation Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism • CRCL Engages with Somali-American Communities in the Twin Cities • CRCL Third Quarter Report • Fourth Periodic Report of the ICCPR • TSA Cares •*