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## Speakers

**Speaker(s):** John Conyers Jr.

## Full Text

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speech of  
HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.  
of michigan  
in the house of representatives  
Tuesday, July 30, 2013

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the End Racial Profiling Act of 2013, along with additional cosponsors. This legislation represents a comprehensive federal commitment to healing the rift caused by racial profiling and restoring public confidence in the criminal justice system at-large. This legislation is designed to enforce the constitutional right to equal protection of the laws by changing the policies and procedures underlying the practice of profiling.

This legislation can be traced back to the data collection efforts of the late 1990's that were designed to determine whether racial profiling was a fact versus an urban legend. Based upon the work around that legislation, by September 11, 2001, there was significant empirical evidence and wide agreement among Americans, including President Bush and Attorney General Ashcroft, that racial profiling was a tragic fact of life in the minority community and that the Federal government should take action to end the practice.

Moreover, many in the law enforcement community have acknowledged that singling out people for heightened scrutiny based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin had eroded the trust in law enforcement necessary to appropriately serve and protect our communities.

During our 112th Congress Judiciary Committee hearing on racial profiling, we approached the issue from the perspective of "smart policing" and what makes sense in a time of austerity for protecting public safety. I believe that it became clear during the hearing that enough agreement exists to allow us to re-open the bipartisan dialogue on racial profiling commenced by President Bush and Attorney General Ashcroft.

Despite the fact that the majority of law enforcement officers perform their duties professionally and without bias-and we value their service highly-the specter of racial profiling has contaminated the relationship between the police and minority communities to such a degree that federal action is justified to begin addressing the issue.

While the Department of Justice promulgated a series of guidelines in 2003 which were designed to end the practice of racial profiling by federal law enforcement agencies, these measures do not reach the vast majority of racial profiling complaints arising from the routine activities of state and local law enforcement agencies. Further, the guidelines provide no enforcement mechanism or methods for identifying law enforcement agencies not in compliance and, therefore, fail to resolve the racial profiling problem nationwide. In this instance, there is no substitute for comprehensive federal anti-profiling legislation.

The End Racial Profiling Act is designed to eliminate the well documented problem of racial, ethnic, religious, and national origin profiling. First, the bill provides a prohibition on racial profiling, enforceable by declaratory or injunctive relief. Second, the bill mandates that training on racial profiling issues as part of Federal law enforcement training, the collection of data on all routine or spontaneous investigatory activities that is to be submitted through a standardized form to the Department of Justice.

Third, the Justice Department is authorized to provide grants for the development and implementation of best policing practices, such as early warning systems, technology integration, and other management protocols that discourage profiling. Finally, the Attorney General is required to provide periodic reports to assess the nature of any ongoing discriminatory profiling practices.

Recent events demonstrate that racial profiling remains a divisive issue that strikes at the very foundation of our democracy. Though the death of Trayvon Martin was not the result of a law enforcement encounter, the issues of race and reasonable suspicion of criminal conduct are so closely linked in the minds of the public that his death cannot be separated from the law enforcement profiling debate.

Ultimately, he is one of too many individuals across the country who have been victimized

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by a perception of criminality simply because of their race, ethnicity, religion or national origin. These individuals are denied the basic respect and equal treatment that is the right of every American.

Decades ago, in the face of shocking violence, the passage of sweeping civil rights legislation made it clear that race should not affect the treatment of an individual American under the law. I believe that thousands of pedestrian and traffic stops of innocent minorities and the killing of innocent teen calls for a similar federal response. The practice of using race as a criterion in law enforcement undermines the progress we have made toward racial equality. Please join me in supporting this legislation.

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