

Mass. Police Association President responds to Senator Warren's remarks on justice system

The following is from Chief Steven J. Wojnar of the Dudley Police Department and President of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association:

Good afternoon, last week, Senator Elizabeth Warren stated "The American criminal justice system is racist ... front to back." This statement is an insult to the hard-working men and women of the Yarmouth Police Department as well as other Local, State and Federal Law Enforcement Agencies who are part of the criminal justice system. Additionally, there are many District Attorneys, Judges, Probation Officers, Parole Officers and other parts of the system that she slapped in the face.

It is more bothersome that a short time ago Sen. Warren made some efforts to pay respects to Sgt. Sean Gannon and Sgt. Michael Chesna who lost their lives while protecting us all. Sen. Warren's recent statement tarnished us all and diminished the sincerity of her condolence efforts. I now cannot trust her actions or words are real. I have a lot of respect for those who serve in elected positions even though we may disagree at times, however, statements like this are disrespectful and divisive. In spite of what Sen. Warren said, the Yarmouth Police Department will continue to serve ALL people with dignity and fairness.

Respectfully,

Chief Frank G. Fredrickson

Below is a letter sent to Senator Warren by the Massachusetts
Chief of Police Association Chief President Steven J. Wojnar

August 7, 2018

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren,

As President of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police
Association, I felt compelled to write you and ask for
clarification of your recent comments. An article that
appeared in The Worcester Telegram and Gazette from August 4,
2018 was entitled "Elizabeth Warren: Criminal Justice System
"racist" front to back."

<http://www.telegram.com/.../elizabeth-warren-criminal-justice...> .
While at a Congressional Black Caucus event at Dillard
University in New Orleans, you are quoted as saying, "the hard
truth about our criminal justice system: It's racist...I mean
front to back."

As a police chief in your home state of Massachusetts, as well
as the statewide association representative, I am extremely
troubled by this statement. Labeling the entire criminal
justice profession as "racist" spreads false and damaging
information about our members. We feel we do a very good job
in Massachusetts of producing professional and community-
oriented police officers. These men and women, from a variety
of backgrounds, provide dedicated service to their respective
communities under difficult and highly scrutinized
circumstances each day. As leaders, we are always concerned
about having our officers conduct themselves professionally
and fairly when dealing with the public. When our elected
officials make generalized and inflammatory statements about
our entire profession, without any information to back their

position, it creates further hostility toward our officers and can damage the positive relationships with our residents that we have worked long and hard to establish.

From the outside, it appears your statement was strategically placed to gather support for your position. As you may know, this is troubling to the law enforcement professionals in the state you represent. In recent months, we have seen the murder of two officers in Yarmouth and Weymouth. In only the last two weeks, two officers were shot in Falmouth. All of these officers were simply doing their jobs when they encountered dangerous individuals. The outpouring of community support for these officers and their departments would appear to be contrary to your position. On each occasion mentioned above, the respective chiefs were contacted by their elected local, state, and federal officials. They were offered any support necessary. I am sure the discussion about the profession being racist was never brought up during these times. Why is it appropriate now? At bare minimum, we are requesting an explanation for your comments. As law enforcement professionals, as well as your constituents, that is deserved. I gladly offer you the opportunity to discuss anything with us that you feel appropriate. We always remain open to a conversation. Should you wish to do so, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for the time and attention.

Sincerely,

Chief Steven J. Wojnar
Dudley Police Department
President, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association