

# THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## FEDERAL PANEL TO HOLD BRIEFING WITH DC PUBLIC SCHOOL CHANCELLOR AND FORMER DC MAYOR ON CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES AND SCHOOL CHOICE

**What: Briefing of the District of Columbia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

**When: Thursday, October 16, 2008, 9:00 a.m.**

**Where: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 624 9<sup>th</sup> St., Rm. 540, N.W., Washington, D.C.**

Washington, DC -- The District of Columbia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will hold a briefing to gather information from elected officials, government officials, education specialists, and community advocates on the issue of civil rights, school choice, and education in the District of Columbia.

*Background:* Leaders talk about the vital importance of education – John McCain has called education the civil rights issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and Barack Obama has stated that the failure to act to improve public education has put our nation in jeopardy. Still, disparities remain. Nationwide, the high school graduation rate for African-American students is 57 percent, for Latino students 60 percent, while graduation rates for white students are 78 percent. Additionally, according to some estimates, white students in twelfth grade are on average four years ahead of black students in reading and math skills. This briefing will look at education issues in the District, including whether extending school choice options can help improve the quality of education for the children of D.C.

Participants include Michelle Rhee, Chancellor of the D.C. Public Schools, and former Mayor Anthony Williams. The briefing will also include Ximena Hartssock, Tamera Lewis, Erin McGoldrick and Abigail Smith of the D.C. Public School System; Brian Jones of the D.C. Public School Charter Board; Casey Lartigue, former policy analyst with Cato's Center for Educational Freedom; Ariana Quiñones-Miranda of Focus DC; Don Soifer of the Lexington Institute; Lisa Tabaku of the Center for Applied Linguistics; and Attorney Donna Wulcan.

The briefing is open to the public.

### **The DC Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

*The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has established state advisory committees to advise the Commission about civil rights issues in their states that are within the Commission's jurisdiction. More specifically, the committees are authorized to receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public officials, and representatives of public and private organizations in response to committee inquiries; forward advice and recommendations to the Commission; and assist the Commission in its public education and outreach efforts. The committees are comprised of state citizens who serve without compensation.*

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