

St. Mary's County Branch

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Post Office Box 189 Lexington Park, Maryland 20653 (301) 863-3011

PRESS RELEASE



Contact: Wayne Scriber, President
wscriber@hotmail.com
(301) 863-3011

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State NAACP HARNESSES CELL PHONE POWER TO LAUNCH NEW HIGH TECH "RAPID RESPONDER SYSTEM" TO HELP CITIZENS REPORT POLICE MISCONDUCT

The St. Mary's County Branch of the NAACP today joins "Smart and Safe," a ground-breaking national NAACP initiative to help fight crime in American cities and town, and to help public safety officials move beyond the "tough on crime" policies that have lost their effectiveness.

The initiative includes a bold new online effort, the NAACP Rapid Responder System (RRS), a quick, effective way for citizens to report instances police misconduct. Available through the NAACP website (www.naacp.org) the Rapid Responder System allows residents to send instant texts, emails, or video reports of police abuse via cell phone to the association.

Benjamin Jealous, President and CEO of said the initiative is part of a wider Criminal Justice strategy "Smart and Safe" that the NAACP is launching during its Centennial Year.

"Nationwide, more than 26,000 citizen complaints of police officer use of force were filed with state and local law enforcement agencies in 2002. However, because many incidents are not reported, this number does not capture the magnitude of the problem," Jealous said.

"Research has shown that there are many barriers to reporting incidents of police misconduct, including intimidation at police departments and a lack of trust in the integrity of the system, among other reasons. This breakdown leads to an absence of public safety and a deterioration of quality in many communities of color. But public safety is a civil and a human right; and so we want a more accurate count of these incidents," Jealous said.

"We know that most of the state and local police officers are good public servants but the few who violate people's rights are often not held accountable. We hope to improve the relationship between our community and law enforcement which is the best way to create the trust needed for police to effectively solve crimes," said Wayne Scriber, St. Mary's County Branch President. The Rapid Responder Form will be available July 6 via the main NAACP website, at www.naacpnet.org.