



CITY OF HOUSTON

OFFICE OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBER JOLANDA "JO" JONES

July 24, 2009

SUBJECT: Response to Letter from HFD Union President

For more Information please call Keith Wade at (713) 398-8969

Yesterday I received a letter from Jeffrey Caynon, President of the Houston Professional Firefighters Association Local 341.

That letter contained a number of inflammatory misstatements and factual inaccuracies and was distributed to the media in an obvious attempt to focus attention on me and distract from the failure of the union to take appropriate steps to protect its members from the alleged acts of racist and sexist harassment and retaliation directed at minority and women firefighters.

The last thing I want is for that letter to distract from the inappropriate conduct that is under investigation at the department – or from the righteous anger that so many Houstonians, including me, feel over the events of the last several weeks.

I disagree, in the strongest terms, with Mr. Caynon's characterization of our meeting. While he is entitled to his opinion, justice will be served if we are operating under the same set of facts. There was no threat by the restaurant owner to call the police. In fact, as I was leaving I was pulled aside by a woman sitting at the next table with her young son, who wanted her son to meet me because she was proud that I was standing up for women.

I challenged Mr. Caynon in our heated conversation to stand up more forcefully for these female firefighters – whose jobs are stressful enough without having to deal with a hostile work environment while putting their lives at risk to keep Houston safe. During this heated discussion, I used inappropriate language used by others to describe Mr. Caynon, and for this, I apologize.

I want Houstonians to know that I will continue to challenge Mr. Caynon and our leaders until we honor all our firefighters by providing a workplace that is free from discrimination, intimidation and retaliation for ALL.

I respectfully ask Mr. Caynon and the union to do the same.

What else is a union for?

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