

SFChronicle

JUN 25 1975

FBI to Allow Agents to Be Short

Washington

The FBI has decided to admit short and medium-sized people to the ranks of special agents.

Director Clarence M. Kelley's decision to abandon the agency's decades-old height requirement might make it easier for many more women to qualify as FBI agents.

Kelley and other top FBI officials decided last week to drop the rule that all agents must be at least 5 feet, 7 inches tall, an FBI spokesman said Monday.

"They felt it was only a matter of time, that it was one of those things that had to go," the spokesman said in response to questions.

Height requirements maintained by the FBI and by some local police forces have been attacked as illegal discrimination against women.

The FBI spokesman said, however, that the height requirement was not abandoned merely to satisfy the demands of women protesting it.

"We were very much concerned with men, too," he said. "If you turned a person down based on a quarter-inch, that might be pretty severe."

The FBI has no figures on the number of applicants rejected simply because they weren't tall enough, the spokesman said.

Applicants must meet several standards of education, experience, eyesight and general physical ability.

Even though a specific height requirement now has been ruled out, an applicant's height still may figure in the judgment of general physical ability, the spokesman said.

Field agents who interview applicants must "keep in mind whether a person can adequately handle himself or herself in any situation," he said.

The spokesman said the 5-foot-7-inch height rule has been in effect since the FBI was formed more than a half-century ago.

Associated Press