ASSEMBLY, No. 711

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION
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SYNOPSIS
Establishes “New Jersey Reparations Task Force.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.
AN ACT establishing the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” to develop reparatory proposals and recommendations to address caused by New Jersey’s role in America’s institution of slavic racial discrimination.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State

1. The Legislature finds and declares:
   a. Four hundred years ago this year, enslave Africans were Virginia as captives.
   b. From 1619 to 1865, approximately 4,000,000 Africans under a practice that was constitutionally and statutorily sanctione United States and the colonies that became the United States.
   c. The system of slavery that flourished in the United States shameful, and inhuman deprivation of the life, liberty, humanity, heritage of Africans and also denied them, among other things, the upon which this country, and its economy, was built.
   d. An overwhelming body of scholarship, legal and documentation, and the modern day lived experiences of the d Africans form the basis for inquiry into the ongoing effects of the ii its legacy of persistent systemic structures of discrimination on l communities in the United States.
   e. Following the abolition of slavery, state actors at the feder continued to perpetuate, condone, and profit from practices that co systemically disadvantage Black people, including sharecroppin; Crow laws, redlining, unequal education, and disproportionate tr the criminal justice system.
   f. Contrary to what many people believe, slavery was not ju and took root very deeply in New Jersey. In the early 17th Cer African people arrived in New Netherland, a Dutch settlement i Atlantic, which included portions of present day New Jersey. A increased, the number of enslaved African people imported to Nev Bergen County becoming the largest slaveholding county in the P In 1704, the Province of New Jersey introduced the “Slave C enslaved Africans and free Africans from owning property and m staying out past curfew, illegal for Black people. Although Ne importation of enslaved Africans in 1786 and enacted a law in gradually, the State Legislature passed “Peace Resolutions” in 1 Lincoln’s power to emancipate slaves and later voted against the United States Constitution.
   g. In 1844, New Jersey also restricted access to the ballot bo people with criminal convictions the same year it restricted voting Northern state to do so.
   h. While many Northern states abolished slavery following th opposed the Emancipation Proclamation and was the last Northern Following the Civil War, New Jersey refused to ratify the Reconstr
i. New Jersey’s deep roots in American slavery and its vesti
present day. A direct line can be traced from New Jersey’s role in
system today of voter suppression, racial wealth disparities, ma
segregation, and crumbling infrastructure in Black communities in
current elevated lead levels in water and homes.

j. The full effects of the institution and legacy of slaver
y in New Jersey have not been sufficiently examine
remedies for past injustice and present harm, or sufficient efforts ;
result of historic and continued systemic racial discrimination, Blac
confront some of the worst racial disparities in America, including
areas:

(1) Access to Democracy: New Jersey suffers
disenfranchisement, denying the vote to over 100,000 people in 
probation, according to State date. Almost half are Black, though
just 15 percent of the State’s population. The racism of the cri
directly imported into the franchise.

(2) Youth Justice: Generations of Black kids have experienc
justice system. Just two years after the Civil War, New Jersey
largest youth prison for boys. Today, Black children are 30 times r
up than white children, the highest disparity rate in America, even
children commit most offenses at similar rates. As of May 1,
children are incarcerated in New Jersey, compared to 113 Black
State data.

(3) Housing and the Racial Wealth Gap: New Jersey al
restrictive covenants that prohibited Black people from buying,
property based on race, and redlining, which targeted Black pe
housing loans. That legacy of systemic housing discrimination
discrepancy in New Jersey home ownership rates: 75.8 percent fo
37.8 percent for Black households. Because home ownership
wealth, Black and Latino people in New Jersey confront one of
gaps in America. The median net worth for New Jersey’s white fi:
ighest in the nation. For New Jersey’s Black and Latino famili
$5,900 and $7,020, respectively, according to the Prosperity Now
also leads the nation in home foreclosures, according to ATTOM D.

(4) Racial Segregation: Racial segregation itself, born from
pervades New Jersey, which, while one of the most racially diver
also among the most segregated. New Jersey’s racial diversity
combined with its extreme wealth and punishing poverty, has c
public classrooms some of the fiercest segregation by race, ethnici
country. Nearly half of New Jersey’s Black and Latino students
more than 90 percent nonwhite. Almost two-thirds go to schools
percent nonwhite.

k. To address these systemic challenges in New Jersey, the “
Task Force” will research, write, and publish a report that will n
based reparations in New Jersey and outline policy recommendat
the harm that has resulted from America’s original sin in the Garde
1. It is in the interest of the State and of the people of New Jersey to initiate and foster methods of improving knowledge and understanding of African-Americans and other ethnic groups in New Jersey and to foster communication and dialogue, for the purpose of achieving reparations.

m. Therefore, it is in the interest of the State and the people of New Jersey to urge New Jersey to take a role in American slavery and its aftermath, and to set forth comprehensive policy recommendations aimed to develop profound and reparative investments in Black communities impacted by New Jersey’s history of discrimination.

n. The urgency for the establishment of this task force is due to the African-American population, some of whom are the grandchildren of Black people and can bear direct witness to some of the severe oppression, is advancing in age. As too many generations of Black people passed without benefit of any remedies for the injustices they endured, New Jersey make the establishment of this task force an imperative.

2. There is hereby established in the Department of State in the State Government a task force to be known as the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force.”

a. The task force shall consist of 11 members, at least seven of whom shall be appointed as follows:

(1) three members shall be appointed by the Governor, not more than one of whom shall be from the same political party; and

(2) eight members shall be appointed by the Legislative leaders:

(a) two members appointed by the Senate President, not more than one of whom shall be a member of the Senate;

(b) two members appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate;

(c) two members appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, not more than one of whom shall be a member of the General Assembly;

(d) two members appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly.

At a minimum, four of the public members of the task force shall be persons recommended by organizations concerned with the issues of equal rights; racial, social and economic justice and equality; reparations concerning the African-American community, including the New Jersey branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for Social Justice, the Rutgers University Inclusion Project, and the New Jersey Conference of Black Churches.

b. The members shall serve until the task force submits a report to the Governor and the Legislature. This report shall be made publically and in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the appointment was made.
3.   a.   The “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” shall be practicable after the appointment of a majority of its members and a vice chair among its members and a secretary who need not be a force. The presence of six members of the task force shall constitute a quorum, but may only vote when a quorum is present. The task force may incur traveling and expenses as it may deem necessary, within the limits of funds made available. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation and shall be reimbursed for expenses actually incurred in the performance of the force.  

   b.   (1) The task force shall hold at least six public meetings throughout the State, including Camden, Paterson, Newark, New Brunswick, Atlantic City, and other designated locations at such times and places as the task force shall determine, but not later than 90 days after enactment. The task force shall invite to testify the mayor of the city or municipality in which the meeting is held, and at least two members of the City Council, Freeholders and two members of the Human Relations Committee of the city or municipality is located. The task force shall invite to testify leaders in African-American organizations or communities, or have an interest in the history of slavery in America, New Jersey history; African-American history, African-Caribbean history, labor history, education, economics, health, housing, human services, religion, or sociology. All issues raised by those testifying at meetings shall be recorded and included, together with the task force’s responses, if any, in the final report to the Governor and the Legislature.

   (2) The Governor shall call the first meeting of the task force to occur on the first day of the third month after enactment.

   c.   The task force shall invite public comment, including testimony, on the issues the task force is required to address as part of its response to the governor.

   d.   The Department of State shall publicize the task force’s meetings on the department’s website.

   e.   The task force shall be entitled to avail itself of the assistance of staff of the Department of State, and of the employees of any other board, bureau, commission, or agency, as it may require and as may be necessary to carry out its purposes.

   f.   The task force may avail itself of the assistance of the employees of any board, bureau, commission, or agency, as it may require and as necessary to carry out its purposes.

   g.   The task force may submit any information or research with regard to the duties it is charged with pursuant to section 4 of this act.

4.   It shall be the duty of the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” to develop reparations proposals for Black people in this State.

   a.   In performing this duty, the commission shall:

   (1)   Identify, compile, and synthesize the relevant corpus of evidence of the institution of slavery that existed within the United States from 1619 through 1865. The task force shall prepare a final report which shall include the facts related to:

   (a)   the capture and procurement of Africans;
(b) the transport of Africans to the United States and the
United States for the purpose of enslavement, including their treatn
(c) the sale and acquisition of Africans as chattel property in
commerce;
(d) the treatment of African slaves in the colonies and the Uni
deprivation of their freedom, exploitation of their labor, and dest
language, religion, and families;
(e) the extensive denial of humanity, sexual abuse, and chattell
(f) the role of the federal and state governments of the United
institution of slavery in constitutional and statutory provisions,
which the governments prevented, opposed, or restricted effort:
 Africans and their descendants to repatriate to their homeland;
(g) the federal and state laws that discriminated against for
and their descendants who were deemed United States citizens from
(h) other forms of systemic racial discrimination in the pul
against enslaved African people and their descendants who were
citizens from 1868 to the present, including redlining, Jim Crow
covenants, mass incarceration, voter suppression, educational fun
predatory financial practices; and
(i) the lingering negative effects of the institution of slavery as
in this section on living African-Americans and on society in the U
(2) Recommend appropriate ways to educate the New Jersey p
findings.
(3) Recommend appropriate remedies in consideration of the
the matters described in this section.
b. In making recommendations, the task force shall address an
(1) how the recommendations comport with international s
wrongs and injuries caused by the State, that include full reparator
as understood by various relevant international protocols, laws, and
(2) how the State of New Jersey will offer a formal apology or
New Jersey for the perpetration of gross human rights violatic
humanity on African slaves and their descendants;
(3) how New Jersey laws and policies that continue to
negatively affect African-Americans as a group and how those that
effects, both material and psychosocial, can be eliminated;
(4) how the injuries resulting from matters described in this
and provide appropriate policies, programs, projects, and recommen
doing the injuries;
(5) how, in consideration of the task force’s findings, any form
descendants of enslaved Africans is calculated;
(6) what form of compensation should be awarded, through
and who should be eligible for such compensation; and
(7) how, in consideration of the task force’s findings, any oth
or restitution to African descendants is warranted and what the fi
measures should take.
5. The “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” shall issue progress to the Governor and the Legislature no later than 12 months following the initial meeting, and shall submit its final report and recommendations to the Legislature no later than 24 months following the initial meeting. The final report shall be submitted to the Legislature in accordance with section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1). The task force shall issue its final report.

6. This act shall take effect immediately, and shall expire issuance of its final report and recommendations to the Governor at

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” for reparations proposals for African-Americans in this State.

The task force would consist of 11 members, comprised of four public members. Three members would be appointed by the Governor, and three members would be appointed by the Legislative leadership. At a minimum, two members would be appointed from persons recommended by organizations working on the issues of civil rights, human rights, racial, social, and economic reparations and other issues concerning the African-American community. The task force would appoint a chair and a vice chair of the task force. The task force would not be compensated but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

This bill, among other things, requires the task force to:

(1) examine the institution of slavery within the State of New Jersey;
(2) examine the extent to which the State of New Jersey and prevented, opposed, or restricted efforts of former enslaved persons who are considered United States’ citizens to economically thrive in the United States;
(3) examine the lingering negative effects of slavery on living on society in New Jersey and the United States;
(4) research methods and materials for facilitating educational and other formal actions leading to reparations remedies, a sense of justice, and economic justice among enslaved African people in this State;
(5) make recommendations for what remedies should be instrumentalities, and to whom those remedies should be awarded;
(6) address how said recommendations comport with national standards of remedy for wrongs and injuries caused by the State.

The task force will hold at least six public meetings in different locations, including Camden, Paterson, Newark, New Brunswick, Atlantic City, and others. The Governor will call the first meeting of the task force to occur on or before the third month after enactment.
The task force will issue an interim report of its progress to Legislature no later than 12 months following the initial meeting. It will submit its final report and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature no later than 24 months following the initial meeting. The task force will not submit its final report.