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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 systemic 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, enslaved Africans were Virginia as captives.
   b. From 1619 to 1865, approximately 4,000,000 Africans under a practice that was constitutionally and statutorily sanction the United States and the colonies that became the United States.
   c. The system of slavery that flourished in the United States shameful, and inhumane 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 i 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 Atlantic, which included portions of present day New Jersey. A increased, the number of enslaved African people imported to New Bergen County becoming the largest slaveholding county in the P In 1704, the Province of New Jersey introduced the “Slave Co enslaved Africans and free Africans from owning property and me staying out past curfew, illegal for Black people. Although Ne importation of enslaved Africans in 1786 and enacted a law in 1 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 box 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 vestiges present day. A direct line can be traced from New Jersey’s role in the system today of voter suppression, racial wealth disparities, mass incarceration, 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 slavery in New Jersey have not been sufficiently examined for past injustice and present harm, or sufficient efforts have been made to seek remedies for past injustice and present harm, or sufficient efforts have been made to seek remedies for past injustice and present harm.

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

(2) Youth Justice: Generations of Black kids have experienced the full effects of the youth justice system. Just two years after the Civil War, New Jersey opened the largest youth prison for boys. Today, Black children are 30 times more likely to be in trouble than white children, the highest disparity rate in America, even as white and Black children commit most offenses at similar rates. As of May 1, 2023, New Jersey has 7,500 children incarcerated in New Jersey, compared to 113 Black children incarcerated in Black communities.

(3) Housing and the Racial Wealth Gap: New Jersey also suffers from restrictive covenants that prohibited Black people from buying property based on race, and redlining, which targeted Black people for housing loans. That legacy of systemic housing discrimination continues to this day. New Jersey’s home ownership rates: 75.8 percent for all households, 37.8 percent for Black households. Because home ownership wealth, Black and Latino people in New Jersey confront one of the highest racial wealth gaps in America. The median net worth for New Jersey’s white families is $59,900 and $7,020, respectively, according to the Prosperity Now Project.

(4) Racial Segregation: Racial segregation itself, born from the history of slavery, pervades New Jersey, which, while one of the most racially diverse states among the most segregated. New Jersey’s racial diversity combined with its extreme wealth and punishing poverty, has created some of the fiercest segregation by race, ethnicity, religion, and other factors. Nearly half of New Jersey’s Black and Latino students attend schools where more than 90 percent of students are nonwhite. Almost two-thirds go to schools where more than 90 percent of students are nonwhite.

k. To address these systemic challenges in New Jersey, the “New Jersey’s Task Force” will research, write, and publish a report that will outline possible reparations in New Jersey and outline policy recommendations to address the harm that has resulted from America’s original sin in the Garden State.
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 reconciliation and reparation.

m. Therefore, it is in the interest of the State and the people of New Jersey that the New Jersey Reparations Task Force be urged 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 reparatory investments in Black communities impacted by New Jersey’s history of discrimination.

n. The urgency for the establishment of this task force is 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 have passed without benefit of any remedies for the injustices they endured, New Jersey must 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 public members, to 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, one of whom shall be a member of the Senate;

      (c) two members appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, one of whom shall be a member of the General Assembly; and

      (d) two members appointed by the Minority Leader of the General Assembly, one of whom shall be a member 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 civil rights; racial, social and economic justice and equality; reparations concerning the African-American community, including the New Jersey Association for the Advancement of Colored People for Social Justice, the Rutgers University Inclusion Project, and the NAACP.

b. The members shall serve until the task force submits its report to the Governor and the Legislature. This report shall be made publicly available, and 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 expenses as it may deem necessary, within the limits of funds made available for expenses actually incurred in the performance of its duties. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for expenses actually incurred in the performance of their duties.

b. (1) The task force shall hold at least six public meetings at such times and places as the task force shall determine, but not before enactment. The task force shall invite to testify the mayor of a city or municipality in which the meeting is held, and at least two members of the 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 interest in the history of slavery in America, New Jersey history, African-American history, African-Caribbean history, labor history, enforcement, economics, education, health, housing, human services, religion, or sociology. All issues raised by those testifying at these meetings shall be recorded and included, together with the task force’s responses, if any, in the task force’s final report to the Governor and the Legislature.

(2) The Governor shall call the first meeting of the task force to take place on the first day of the third month after enactment. The task force shall invite the public to attend and make public comment, including testimony on the issues the task force is required to address as part of its response to the task force’s final report. The Department of State shall publicize the task force’s meetings on the department’s website.

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

d. The task force shall submit to the Governor and the Legislature a report on its findings and recommendations. The report shall include all issues raised by those testifying at these meetings, together with the task force’s responses, if any, in the task force’s final report to the Governor and the Legislature.

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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 may be necessary for its purposes.

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 for examination shall include the facts related to:

(a) the capture and procurement of Africans;
(b) the transport of Africans to the United States and the co-
United States for the purpose of enslavement, including their treat-
(c) the sale and acquisition of Africans as chattel property in-
(d) the treatment of African slaves in the colonies and the Uni-
deprivation of their freedom, exploitation of their labor, and dest-
(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 form-
    and their descendants who were deemed United States citizens from-
(h) other forms of systemic racial discrimination in the pu-
    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-
(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 reparatio-
            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 recomme-
    of reversing 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 with the issuance of its final report and recommendations to the Governor at

STATEMENT

This bill establishes the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force” to develop 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, three members would be appointed by the Legislative leadership. At a minimum, four members would be appointed from persons recommended by organizations addressing the issues of civil rights, human rights, racial, social and economic reparations and other issues concerning the African-American community. The task force will appoint a chair and a vice chair of the task force. The task force would not be compensated but may be reimbursed for their 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 any of its instrumentalities, prevented, opposed, or restricted efforts of former enslaved persons who are considered United States’ citizens to economically thrive or to achieve freedom from slavery;

(3) examine the lingering negative effects of slavery on living conditions for African-Americans in New Jersey and the United States;

(4) research methods and materials for facilitating education and symbolic acknowledgement, and other formal actions leading to reparations remedies, a sense of justice, and economic justice among 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, submit its final report and recommendations to the Governor and than 24 months following the initial meeting. The task force will its final report.