



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Kennedy & Peoples-Stokes Announce Passage of Bill Extending Authorization of Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY June 18, 2015

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Commission Was At Risk of Deauthorization by End of 2015 – Bill Provides Two-Year Extension

Commission Vital to Progress on Buffalo's East Side, Kennedy & Peoples-Stokes Urge Governor to Swiftly Sign Into Law

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) and Assemblymember Crystal Peoples-Stokes (D-Buffalo) announced passage in both the Senate and the Assembly of **S.5874/A.7823**, a bill providing for the extension of the authorization for the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission. Currently, enacting language for the commission is set to sunset on December 31st of this year; the new legislation provides for a two year extension through the end of 2017. Stretching 2.5 miles from East Ferry St to South Division St, along with other nearby roads, the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor has been home to some of Buffalo's most important and historically significant buildings, including:

- The Michigan Street Baptist Church at 511 Michigan Street. The Church, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was constructed 170 years ago in 1845 by free Blacks,

and played a significant role as one of the final stops on the Underground Railroad, and later was closely involved in the formation of the Niagara Movement, which eventually helped to form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

- The Home of Reverend Dr. Jessie E. Nash at 36 Nash Street. Dr. Nash was noted for playing a vital role in the organizing of the Buffalo Urban League, as well as the Buffalo Branch of the NAACP.
- The Colored Musician's Club at 145 Broadway. A local historic landmark, this club played host to some of the greatest names in jazz, including Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holliday, and Ella Fitzgerald.
- The Little Harlem Night Club at 494 Michigan Street. A local historic landmark, this club was sadly lost to a fire 22 years ago in 1993.

“This legislation will stave off the unnecessary deauthorization of the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission, which is playing a major role in the revitalization of Buffalo’s East Side,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. “I was proud to sponsor this legislation in the Senate, and I strongly urge Governor Cuomo to swiftly sign it into law. The Commission is not just playing a role in preserving our city’s past, it is helping to build our cultural and economic future. Historic sites such as the Colored Musicians Club and the Michigan Street Baptist Church highlight our city’s rich African American cultural history, and will draw in tourists from around the country. With all of the ongoing progress both Downtown and at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, a thriving Michigan Street is needed to ensure Buffalo’s success.”

“Momentum is building rapidly as the Michigan Street Commission works aggressively to increase the corridor’s profile,” said **Assemblymember Peoples-Stokes**. “The corridor commission provides an opportunity for communities to peek into the rich African American history. The Queen City Jazz Festival and Michigan Street Meets Canalside are events that highlight the increased profile in the tourism industry. Very soon visitors and the public will see much more activity taking place in the corridor. I look forward to the Governor signing this bill into law and having him tour the various exhibits on Michigan Street.”

In 2014, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a \$250,000 NYPA grant to support the operations of the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission. Earlier this year, plans were announced to a \$300,000 iconic archway at the intersection of Michigan Street and Broadway, to mark the entrance to the neighborhood. Since its establishment by the New York State Legislature in 2007, the Commission has worked to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the Corridor, and has received significant funding from the both state and local levels.

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