



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin S. Parker

Senator Parker Introduces Legislation to Afford People In Prison The Right to Vote

KEVIN S. PARKER November 1, 2019

| ISSUE: **VOTING, VOTING REFORM**



Albany, N.Y - State Senator Kevin Parker recently introduced legislation to afford people in prison at a state or local correctional facility the right to vote in state elections. The legislation, Senate Bill S.6821, will use the residency prior to the term of confinement as the voting address for incarcerated individuals.

Senator Parker said the following upon the introduction of the legislation:

“When Senate Democrats were in the majority in 2010 we enacted fair, common sense laws to have people in prison counted at their home addresses when redrawing state and local district lines. Today, my legislation builds upon this and the promise of equal protection and our democracy's linchpin of one-person one-vote,” said the Brooklyn Lawmaker.

“As a professor of African-American Studies, I know all too well the horrid evolution of Black people in America: from the Transatlantic journey to the sharecropper; from the Black Codes to the mass incarceration and hyper-policing of communities of color. Further, to this is disenfranchisement and the stripping of Black and Brown people of their social, economic and political power,” he said, adding, “the history of our nation's policies and laws have always been exclusionary as it relates to Black people.”

“Additionally, Nikole Hannah-Jones and The 1619 Project have done an exceptional job reframing the narrative around our country's founding. As we mark the 400th year since the beginning of American slavery as she has shown us, I find it all befitting that we begin to correct our past by allowing people in prison the right to vote in the State of New York.”

If passed by the State Legislature and signed by the Governor, the new law will require the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and state and county boards of elections to develop and implement a program to afford people in prison the right to vote.

New York City Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams stated the following: "Nothing should be able to bar a voter from engaging in the process- regardless of whether or not they are incarcerated. The laws tying the loss of voting to incarceration date back to the post civil war black codes, where states used criminalizing conduct of African Americans as a way to take away the hard fought right to vote. Vermont and Maine already have this universal voting, and I thank Senator Parker for introducing legislation so that New York can join them."

"Returning the right to vote to people in prison sends a clear message that we want them to emerge as responsible civic-minded citizens. When I was in prison, a factory of despair, I would have done anything to be part of the fabric of something larger than myself. Voting gives people that opportunity. Voting offers hope." - Glenn E. Martin, Founder of JustLeadershipUSA & #CLOSErikers Campaign

Soffiyah Elijah, Founder and Executive Director at the Alliance of Families for Justice, added: "The time has come to end felony disenfranchisement in NYS. The strength of a true democracy is built on the full engagement on the entire citizenry and the community. Senator Parker's introduction of bill S6821, which will restore full voting rights to all New York citizens provides an important opportunity for our state to continue to be a progressive leader in voting rights and criminal justice reform."

Jose Saldana, Director of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign said, "More than 40,000 New Yorkers are legally excluded from voting because they are currently in a New York State prison. The large majority are Black & Latinx people who come from marginalized communities. Many are elders who have developed a greater sense of social consciousness and civic responsibility than most people in the outside world during their years and decades of incarceration. The racist roots of barring People of Color from voting are seamlessly connected to democratically disenfranchising people in prison. This is why the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign supports Senator Parker's bill to fully restore the right to vote to all incarcerated people in New York State."

"It's important to remember that New York's voter bans were established in the 19th century as a direct, and racist, response to new civil rights won by Black Americans following emancipation and Reconstruction. That people continue to defend these Jim Crow laws in 2019 is appalling and we appreciate that this issue will be addressed head on in the State Senate in 2020 thanks to the introduction of this legislation," said Nick Encalada-Malinowski

of VOCAL-NY.

About Senator Kevin Parker:

Senator Kevin Parker represents Brooklyn's ethnically diverse 21st Senate District comprised of sections of Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood, Ditmas Park, Kensington, Windsor Terrace, and Park Slope. A lifelong Brooklyn resident, Senator Parker has the honor of serving his community as the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Telecommunications, and on the Senate Standing Committees on Finance; Rules; Alcoholism & Substance Abuse; Insurance; and Banks. For more information on Senator Parker, please visit

www.nysenate.gov/senators/kevin-s-parker

RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S6821

- Introduced

- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Relates to authorizing voting by inmates in correctional facilities; repealer

October 30, 2019

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Do you support this bill?