[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4987

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 16, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman ERIC HOUGHTALING
District 11 (Monmouth)
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District 37 (Bergen)
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District 34 (Essex and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblymen Coughlin, Moen and Zwicker

SYNOPSIS

Creates NJ Legislative Youth Council.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Education Committee on January 3, 2022, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/10/2022)

AN ACT creating the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council and supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. This act shall be known, and may be cited as, the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council Act.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Engagement and participation by our youth in civic life are essential to maintaining the strength of our democracy, but the youth of the United States may not believe that they have a substantive voice in their government or the opportunities to share their perspectives and opinions at the highest levels of our government.

b. The unique perspectives and valuable insights of the youth of this country are essential to ensuring that investments made by the government for programs and services for those youth are effective and efficient.

c. Many state legislatures have created youth councils that have proven to be an effective means of understanding the perspectives and opinions of the youth of the state, leading to more effective and efficient policies, programs, and services for those youth.

d. The creation of a youth council in this State that can advise the New Jersey Legislature will be beneficial for the State and its resident youth.

3. There is established a New Jersey Legislative Youth Council for the purpose of providing a forum for the youth of this State to participate in the democratic process; to advise the Legislature and its committees, commissions, and task forces on the perspectives, opinions, needs, development, and welfare of the youth of the State; and to advise the Legislature and its committees, commissions and task forces on the most effective and efficient policies, programs, and services that the State could provide for the youth of this State. The council shall research, analyze, discuss, and make specific recommendations in the areas of civics education; drugs and substance abuse; emotional and physical health; employment and economic opportunities; environmental protection; gun violence and school safety; homelessness and poverty; mental health; safe environment for youth; sexual harassment and violence; youth services; and youth bias and hate crimes.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:
[1]Assembly AED committee amendments adopted January 3, 2022.

In each two-year term of the New Jersey Legislature, the council shall submit, in writing, a series of policy recommendations to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the General Assembly, the Minority Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the General Assembly. The series of policy recommendations shall be made available online to the public.

The council may express its position publicly on legislation pending before the New Jersey Legislature that is directly relevant to the youth of this State.

4. a. The council shall be comprised of 44 members. Forty members shall be members of the public and four members shall be members of the New Jersey Legislature.

b. Each of the 40 public members shall have been a resident of New Jersey for at least 15 years and shall be between 15 and 23 years of age at the time of appointment.

Each public member shall represent one of the 40 districts of the New Jersey Legislature.

The 40 public members shall be inclusive and reflective of the racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural, and economic diversity of their district.

A public member who is less than 18 years of age shall be required to provide written permission from a parent or legal guardian to be a member of the council and participate in its activities. Any public member who is less than 18 years of age shall be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, or an adult designated in writing by the parent or legal guardian, at all times when attending meetings and other activities of the council.

No public member shall be a family member, or an employee, of a person who is holding, or who held in the five years prior to the public member’s appointment, any appointive or elective public office of this State.

Public members shall serve for a term of two years, and if eligible, may be reappointed to serve for one additional term.

c. The President of the Senate shall appoint one member of the Senate to serve on the council. The Speaker of the General Assembly shall appoint one member of the General Assembly to serve on the council. The Minority Leader of the Senate shall appoint one member of the Senate to serve on the council. The Minority Leader of the General Assembly shall appoint one member of the General Assembly to serve on the council.

The legislative members shall serve a term coterminous with their term of office, and at the pleasure of the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the General Assembly.

The legislative members shall be non-voting, advisory members appointed solely for the purpose of assisting the public members of the council in conducting the council’s meetings and activities, and in fulfilling the council’s purpose.

The legislative members shall advise the council on the legislative process, provide policy and fiscal briefings, assist with the drafting of proposed legislation, and provide such guidance and information as the council deems appropriate.

d. The public members of the council shall serve until their successors are appointed and qualified, and, for this purpose, a public member may serve after reaching the age of 23 years. The term of the successor of any incumbent public member shall be calculated from the expiration of the term of that incumbent public member. A vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment but for the unexpired term only.

e. For the purpose of the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council:

"Appointive or elective public office" means an appointment by the Governor that requires the advice and consent of the Senate, or an appointment by the Governor to serve at the pleasure of the Governor only during his or her term of office, an appointment by an elected public official or elected governing body of a political subdivision of the State, that requires the specific consent or approval of the elected governing body of the political subdivision, or any office filled at an election by the voters at a general election.

"Family member" means a child, sibling, niece, nephew, first cousin, or grandchild, whether the individual is related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

"Youth" means a person at least 15 years of age but under the age of 23 years.

5. The legislative members shall be appointed within 60 days after the creation of the council by law. The legislative members initially appointed shall develop an application form and application process for the selection of the public members. The application form and application process may be revised by a majority vote of the public members appointed to the council.

The member of the Senate and the two members of the General Assembly who represent each district of the New Jersey Legislature shall appoint one person, based on the application submitted by that person, to serve as a public member of the council from among the persons residing in that legislative district who submit applications. The public members shall be appointed within 60 days of the completion of the application form and application process.

If no applications for public membership are received from persons in a legislative district or there are no qualified applicants, an additional 30 days to appoint a public member from that legislative district shall be provided for the receipt of applications from person who reside in that legislative district.

6. a. The legislative members of the council appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly shall serve as co-chairs at the initial meeting of the council. At the same initial meeting, the public members shall elect five of the public members of the council to service on the council's executive board.

b. The executive board shall be comprised of five public members and the four legislative members. The five public members of the executive board shall be elected by a majority vote of the public members of the council. Executive board members shall be elected to serve for two years and shall not be eligible to be elected to serve on the executive board for any additional term. The members of the executive board shall include a chair, vice chair, secretary, and any other officer the council deems necessary and appropriate.

7. a. The council shall meet at least four times a year to conduct business. The council shall meet at the State House Complex to conduct business.

b. A majority of the public members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and the acts of a majority of the public members present at a meeting at which there is a quorum shall constitute the acts of the council.

The council shall hold at least two public hearings each year, in different parts of the State, for the purpose of receiving testimony from members of the public, and in particular from the youth of this State.

The council may hold such other meetings throughout the year as the council may deem appropriate.

c. The council shall submit an annual report by January 15 of each year to the Legislature of its activities and recommendations. The report shall be made available online to the public.

d. The council shall be constituted upon the appointment of the majority of its public members and shall have no expiration date.

8. a. The public members of the council shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as public members of the council, within the limits of funds made available to the council for its purpose.

b. The New Jersey Legislature may accept monetary donations, that shall be deposited into the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council Fund, from public and private sources to support the activities of the council. A monetary donation shall not be accepted from any person or entity with a pecuniary or other vested interest in the outcome of the work of the council or when the donation would in any way compromise the work of the council. A person or entity who desires to make a monetary donation shall certify to the council or its designee, in the manner prescribed by the council, that the person or entity has

no pecuniary or other vested interest in the outcome of the work of the council. Donations by a person or entity shall not exceed $500 [1]per calendar year[1] in the aggregate. Each donation shall be subject to approval by the council.

9. The Department of the Treasury shall establish and maintain a special revolving fund to be known as the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council Fund. The fund shall be maintained as a separate account and administered by the Department of the Treasury to support the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council.

The State Treasurer shall administer the fund, which shall be credited with donations received by the New Jersey Legislature for the council, moneys that the Legislature may appropriate, and other moneys made available including, but not limited to, funds provided by the federal government.

10. This act shall take effect immediately.