

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 23

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman ANTHONY S. VERRELLI

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Assemblywoman SHAVONDA E. SUMTER

District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywomen Carter and McKnight

SYNOPSIS

Establishes the “New Jersey State Commission on Urban Violence.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** creating a commission to study the sources
2 and causes of violence in urban New Jersey.

3
4 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey’s urban municipalities are being ravaged by an
5 unprecedented wave of violence; and

6 **WHEREAS**, Families and communities are being spiritually and
7 psychologically devastated and crushed by the horrors of this
8 violence; and

9 **WHEREAS**, Children, friends, and neighbors are being injured,
10 maimed, and killed by seemingly senseless, meaningless, and
11 inexplicable acts of violence; and

12 **WHEREAS**, The victims, their families, their friends, their neighbors,
13 their communities, and all the citizens of goodwill in this State cry
14 out for assistance; and

15 **WHEREAS**, The tragedy, pain, anxiety, and fear associated with this
16 violence cannot be permitted to continue; and

17 **WHEREAS**, The families and residents of New Jersey’s urban
18 municipalities deserve and are entitled to safe, secure, and
19 peaceable communities and neighborhoods; and

20 **WHEREAS**, It is, therefore, altogether fitting and proper, and within the
21 public interest, to establish a commission to study the sources and
22 causes of the violence that is plaguing our urban communities and
23 to make recommendations to address and alleviate those sources
24 and causes so as to ensure the safety and well-being not only of the
25 children, families, and residents of this State’s urban municipalities,
26 but of all the citizens of New Jersey; now, therefore,

27
28 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
29 *State of New Jersey:*

30
31 1. a. There is established the “New Jersey State Commission on
32 Urban Violence” to study the sources and causes of violence in urban
33 New Jersey.

34 The commission shall consist of 44 members, all ex officio, or
35 their designees: the Governor’s Chief of Staff; the Attorney General;
36 the President of the New Jersey State Conference of the National
37 Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); the
38 Chairperson of the New Jersey Black Issues Convention; the Public
39 Defender; the Prosecutors of the counties of Camden, Essex, Hudson,
40 Mercer, Middlesex, Passaic, and Union; the Chairperson of the New
41 Jersey Legislative Black Caucus; the Chairperson of the New Jersey
42 Legislative Latino Caucus; the President of the Hispanic Bar
43 Association of New Jersey; the President of the Latino Action
44 Network; the Chair of the Commission on Hispanic/Latino Ministry;
45 the President of the Latino Institute; the President of the Latino
46 Leadership Alliance of New Jersey; the Chairperson of the New Jersey
47 chapter of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials; the
48 President of the New Jersey Education Association; the Administrative

1 Director of the Courts; the Superintendent of State Police; the chief
2 law enforcement officers of the five urban municipalities with the
3 highest violent crime rate, as set forth in the most recent Uniform
4 Crime Report submitted by the Attorney General to the Governor and
5 the Legislature; the mayors of the five urban municipalities with the
6 highest violent crime rate, as set forth in the most recent Uniform
7 Crime Report submitted by the Attorney General to the Governor and
8 the Legislature; the Commissioner of Community Affairs; the
9 Commissioner of Human Services; the Commissioner of Corrections;
10 the Chairperson of the Department of African American and African
11 Studies, Rutgers, the State University, Newark; the Director of the
12 Center for State Constitutional Studies, Rutgers, the State University,
13 Camden; the Dean of the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice, Rutgers,
14 the State University, Newark; the President of the New Jersey State
15 AFL-CIO; the President of the New Jersey Black Baptist Convention;
16 the President of the Newark North Jersey Committee of Black
17 Churchmen; the President of the Garden State Bar Association; and the
18 President of the Association of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey.

19 Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled in
20 the same manner as the original appointments.

21 Eleven members of the commission shall constitute a quorum to
22 transact its business.

23 b. The members shall hold their initial organizational meeting as
24 soon as practicable, but no later than 45 days following the effective
25 date of this resolution.

26 The members shall select a chairperson from among the members.
27 The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member
28 of the commission.

29 c. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation,
30 but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the
31 performance of their duties as members of the commission, and within
32 the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the
33 commission for its purpose.

34 d. The commission shall be entitled to call to its assistance and
35 avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county, or
36 municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may
37 require and as may be available to it for its purposes.
38

39 2. It shall be the duty of the commission to study the sources
40 and causes of violence in urban New Jersey; to assess the invasive
41 impact this violence is having on individuals, families, and
42 communities, and in particular on the spirit, hopes, and dreams of
43 urban young people, their parents, and family members; and to
44 recommend actions to address and alleviate the sources and causes
45 of this epidemic of violence so as to ensure the safety, security, and
46 well-being of all the residents of New Jersey's urban communities.

1 3. The commission may meet and hold hearings at the places it
2 designates throughout the State and at the times it so determines
3 appropriate for its purposes.

4
5 4. The commission shall submit two interim reports, the first
6 one six months following its organization pursuant to subsection b.
7 of section 1 of this resolution and the second, 12 months following
8 its organization.

9 The commission shall submit its final report and any
10 recommendations it may have to the Governor and the Legislature
11 no later than 18 months following its organization pursuant to
12 subsection b. of section 1 of this resolution.

13 The final report shall be submitted in accordance with the
14 provisions of section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1).

15 The commission shall expire upon the submission of its final
16 report.

17
18 5. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately and shall
19 expire upon the commission's submission of its final report and its
20 recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

21
22
23 STATEMENT
24

25 This joint resolution establishes the "New Jersey State
26 Commission on Urban Violence" to study the sources and causes of
27 violence in urban New Jersey.

28 The commission is to consist of 44 members, representing a
29 broad spectrum of State and local officers and officials, law
30 enforcement, professional organizations, academics, labor, and
31 faith-based and church - centered associations. The members serve
32 ex officio.

33 The joint resolution directs the commission to file two interim
34 reports with the Governor and the Legislature to detail its progress.
35 The first interim report is to be issued six months after the
36 commission's organization; the second interim report is to be issued
37 12 months after its organization.

38 The commission has 18 months from its organization to complete
39 its study and file its final report. The report is to include any
40 recommendations it might have concerning ways to address and
41 alleviate the sources and causes of urban violence so as to ensure
42 the safety, security, and well-being of the children and families
43 living in those communities.

44 According to the sponsor, New Jersey's urban communities are
45 being ravaged by an unprecedented wave of violence. Children,
46 friends, and neighbors are being injured and killed by seemingly
47 senseless, meaningless, and inexplicable acts of violence. The
48 tragedy, pain, and fear resulting from this violence must be stopped.

1 The families and residents of New Jersey’s urban areas deserve and
2 are entitled to safe, secure, and peaceable neighborhoods. The
3 purpose of this commission is to seek ways to address and alleviate
4 the sources and causes of this urban violence.

5 On July 28, 1967, President Lyndon Johnson established “The
6 National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders” to study the
7 sources and causes of the violence and disorder that ravaged many
8 of America’s cities, including Newark. Popularly known as the
9 “Kerner Commission,” the commission completed a comprehensive
10 and thorough study of the factors that led to the violence, and
11 submitted wide-ranging and insightful recommendations to address
12 the myriad problems they discovered.

13 The sponsor envisions the study and the recommendations of the
14 “New Jersey State Commission on Urban Violence” as having a
15 powerful impact, comparable to that of the “Kerner Commission,”
16 enabling New Jersey to begin to fully and successfully address the
17 sources and causes of urban violence.

WITHDRAWN