

SENATE, No. 3164

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 9, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Senator TROY SINGLETON

District 7 (Burlington)

SYNOPSIS

Creates NJ Legislative Youth Council.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/4/2021)

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

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. This act shall be known, and may be cited as, the New Jersey
8 Legislative Youth Council Act.

9
10 2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

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

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

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

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

29
30 3. There is established a New Jersey Legislative Youth Council
31 for the purpose of providing a forum for the youth of this State to
32 participate in the democratic process; to advise the Legislature and
33 its committees, commissions, and task forces on the perspectives,
34 opinions, needs, development, and welfare of the youth of the State;
35 and to advise the Legislature and its committees, commissions and
36 task forces on the most effective and efficient policies, programs,
37 and services that the State could provide for the youth of this State.
38 The council shall research, analyze, discuss, and make specific
39 recommendations in the areas of civics education; drugs and
40 substance abuse; emotional and physical health; employment and
41 economic opportunities; environmental protection; gun violence and
42 school safety; homelessness and poverty; mental health; safe
43 environment for youth; sexual harassment and violence; youth
44 services; and youth bias and hate crimes.

45 In each two-year term of the New Jersey Legislature, the council
46 shall submit, in writing, a series of policy recommendations to the
47 President of the Senate, the Speaker of the General Assembly, the
48 Minority Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the

1 General Assembly. The series of policy recommendations shall be
2 made available online to the public.

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

6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 c. The President of the Senate shall appoint one member of the
32 Senate to serve on the council. The Speaker of the General
33 Assembly shall appoint one member of the General Assembly to
34 serve on the council. The Minority Leader of the Senate shall
35 appoint one member of the Senate to serve on the council. The
36 Minority Leader of the General Assembly shall appoint one member
37 of the General Assembly to serve on the council.

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 “Family member” means a child, sibling, niece, nephew, first
20 cousin, or grandchild, whether the individual is related by blood,
21 marriage, or adoption.

22 “Youth” means a person at least 15 years of age but under the
23 age of 23 years.

24

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

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

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

43

44 6. a. The legislative members of the council appointed by the
45 President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly
46 shall serve as co-chairs at the initial meeting of the council. At the
47 same initial meeting, the public members shall elect five of the

1 public members of the council to service on the council's executive
2 board.

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

12

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

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

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

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

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

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

31

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

37 b. The New Jersey Legislature may accept monetary donations,
38 that shall be deposited into the New Jersey Legislative Youth
39 Council Fund, from public and private sources to support the
40 activities of the council. A monetary donation shall not be accepted
41 from any person or entity with a pecuniary or other vested interest
42 in the outcome of the work of the council or when the donation
43 would in any way compromise the work of the council. A person or
44 entity who desires to make a monetary donation shall certify to the
45 council or its designee, in the manner prescribed by the council, that
46 the person or entity has no pecuniary or other vested interest in the
47 outcome of the work of the council. Donations by a person or

1 entity shall not exceed \$500 in the aggregate. Each donation shall
2 be subject to approval by the council.

3
4 9. The Department of the Treasury shall establish and maintain
5 a special revolving fund to be known as the New Jersey Legislative
6 Youth Council Fund. The fund shall be maintained as a separate
7 account and administered by the Department of the Treasury to
8 support the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council.

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

14
15 10. This act shall take effect immediately.

16
17
18 STATEMENT

19
20 This bill creates the New Jersey Legislative Youth Council. The
21 council would provide a forum for the youth of this State to
22 participate in the democratic process; to advise the Legislature and
23 its committees, commissions, and task forces on the perspectives,
24 opinions, needs, development, and welfare of the youth of the State;
25 and to advise the Legislature and its committees, commissions and
26 task forces on the most effective and efficient policies, programs,
27 and services that the State could provide for the youth of this State.
28 The council would also research, analyze, discuss, and make
29 specific recommendations in the areas of civics education; drugs
30 and substance abuse; emotional and physical health; employment
31 and economic opportunities; environmental protection; gun violence
32 and school safety; homelessness and poverty; mental health; safe
33 environment for youth; sexual harassment and violence; youth
34 services; and youth bias and hate crimes. In each two-year term of
35 the New Jersey Legislature, the council would submit in writing a
36 series of policy recommendations to the President of the Senate, the
37 Speaker of the General Assembly, the Minority Leader of the
38 Senate and the Majority Leader of the General Assembly. The
39 council could express its position publicly on legislation pending
40 before the New Jersey Legislature that is directly relevant to the
41 needs, development, and welfare of the youth of this State.

42 The bill defines “youth” to mean a person at least 15 years of age
43 but under the age of 23 years.

44 The council would be comprised of 44 members, 40 public
45 members and four members of the New Jersey Legislature.

46 Each of the 40 public members must have been a resident of
47 New Jersey for at least 15 years and must be between the ages of 15
48 and 23 years of age at the time of appointment. Each public

1 member would represent one of the 40 districts of the New Jersey
2 Legislature. The 40 public members would be inclusive and
3 reflective of the racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural, and
4 economic diversity of their district. No public member can be a
5 family member or an employee of a person who is holding, or who
6 held in the prior five years, any appointive or elective public office.

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

9 The three legislators in each legislative district would appoint
10 one public member to the council, based on applications submitted
11 from persons who reside in that district.

12 The legislative members would be appointed by the President of
13 the Senate, the Speaker of the General Assembly, the Minority
14 Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the General
15 Assembly. The legislative members would serve as non-voting,
16 advisory members, appointed solely for the purpose of assisting the
17 public members of the council in conducting the council's meetings
18 and activities, and in fulfilling the council's purpose.

19 The bill provides for the creation of an executive board for the
20 council.

21 The bill requires the council to meet at least four times a year to
22 conduct business, and to hold at least two public hearings each year.

23 The bill permits the Legislature to accept donations from public
24 or private sources to support the activities of the council, with
25 certain restrictions. Donations by a person or entity could not
26 exceed \$500 in the aggregate.