

## NAACP New Jersey State Conference

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Office of Senator Ronald L. Rice  
Chair of the New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus  
1044 South Orange Avenue  
Newark, New Jersey 07106

January 10, 2020

Dear Senator Rice,

The "Liberty State Park Protection Act" is well meaning legislation, but it falls incredibly short of providing any real benefit to people of color in Hudson County. If the bill passes as is, it will leave minority communities shut out of the discussion on the future of Liberty State Park. We ask that the New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus support amending S3357/A4903 to allow the chance to create new benefits for communities of color at Liberty State Park, while still preserving the entirety of the original Park.

Paul Fireman has proposed cleaning up the abandoned Caven Point property while at the same time protecting the Park's vast green space and improving accessibility. He wants to create public programs that will allow visitors to better utilize and take part in all the Park has to offer.

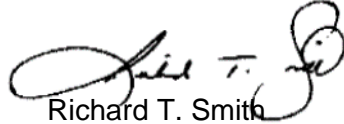
These public programs mean things like recreational programs as well as ballfields and basketball courts. It means the creation of a First Tee program at Liberty National Golf Course, which will greatly benefit minority communities in Hudson County. The First Tee of Essex County and The First Tee of Plainfield, just two examples of the program in New Jersey, both have over 75% minority participation. Moreover, in addition to learning about the game of golf, The First Tee has provided tutoring and over \$400,000 in college scholarships to underprivileged young people who might otherwise have not had these kinds of opportunities.

Right now, S3357/A4903 offers none of these opportunities. Park advocates are passionate about the issue and I can appreciate that. That does not mean, however, that they are entitled to having the only voice being listened to on the future of Liberty State Park. People of color in Hudson County get to have a say as well.

I know the Fireman family is committed to doing what is right. That commitment was made clear when they used their own money to clean up the once polluted site that is now Liberty National Golf Course. I firmly believe they want to do what is in the best interest of the people of Jersey City.

I hope you will take these factors into consideration and support amending the legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich T. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "S".

Richard T. Smith  
President, NAACP New Jersey State Conference