

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 948

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 2, 1996

The Senate Judiciary Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 948.

This bill would create the New Jersey Human Relations Council. The creation of such a council was one of the recommendations contained in the 1993 report of the Commission on Racism, Racial Violence and Religious Violence. The Council would function as a permanent, independent body in but not of the Department of Law and Public Safety.

Among the duties of the Council would be to assist with coordinating efforts to prevent and deter crimes based upon the victim's race; color; religion; sexual orientation; ethnicity; gender or physical, mental or cognitive disability. The Council would also be charged with assisting county human relations commissions in relieving tensions within communities and with providing training programs for members of county human relations commissions and other interested leaders.

The Council would consist of thirty-three members. Ten members of the council would be public members who shall be representative of the State's various ethnic; religious; racial; sexual orientation; gender and disabilities organizations. The Governor would appoint four public members and the Senate President and Assembly Speaker would each appoint three public members. No more than two of each of these appointments could be of the same political party.

Two members of Senate and two members of the Assembly appointed on a bipartisan basis would also serve on the Council.

In addition, there would be three representatives from county human relations commissions representing three different regions of the State. The members of the Council representing county human relations commissions would be appointed by the Governor.

The following would serve as ex officio members of the Council: the Attorney General; the Commissioner of the Department of Education; the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs; the Commissioner of the Department of the Corrections; the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services; the Public Defender; the Director of the Administrative Offices of the Courts; the Director of the Division of Criminal Justice; the Superintendent of the Division of State Police; the Director of the Division on Civil Rights;

the President of the County Prosecutors Association; the President of the New Jersey Association of Chiefs of Police; the President of the Bias Crime Officers Association of New Jersey; a county Superintendent of Schools selected by the Commissioner of the Department of Education; the President of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association; and the President of the New Jersey Education Association.

The terms of the public members originally appointed would be staggered. Thereafter public members would serve three year terms as would the representatives of the county human relations commissions.

In addition to its other duties, the Council would also be responsible for the issuance of biennial report to the Governor on the status of bias-based violence.