



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

Senate Issues Subpoenas To Address Housing Discrimination On Long Island

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(Albany, NY) The Senate Majority today announced 25 subpoenas have been issued regarding the housing discrimination on Long Island as uncovered by the Newsday investigation. The Senate Committees on Consumer Protection, Housing, and Investigations and Government Operations held a hearing, to determine how best to address this unacceptable situation. The subpoenas were issued to individuals and organizations who were invited to provide

testimony at the last hearing and refused to appear. The Committees determined that subpoenas were necessary to obtain testimony and documents from those who refused. The hearing for the subpoenaed testimony is scheduled for April 17, 2020.

“There is no place in New York for housing discrimination and predatory practices,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “The Senate Majority hearing was an opportunity for all parties to discuss the Newsday investigation and findings of institutionalized discrimination, and help determine how to combat these practices. The individuals and groups subpoenaed by the Senate Majority refused to participate in this hearing. These subpoenas will help us as we work to end racist and biased housing practices throughout New York State.”

The Senate Majority took the rare step of issuing these subpoenas and compelling testimony following the public hearing held to further investigate Newsday’s report of housing discrimination against minority communities on Long Island. All of the individuals and organizations subpoenaed by the Senate were invited and requested to testify at the hearing the Senate Majority held on December 12, 2019, but refused to attend or submit testimony. The second hearing for the subpoenaed testimony is scheduled for April 17, 2020, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM and will take place at the Theodore Roosevelt Executive and Legislative Building, 1550 Franklin Ave, Mineola, NY 11501.

Senator Kevin Thomas, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Consumer Protection, said, “We cannot and will not accept unequal treatment of homebuyers anywhere in New York State, especially on Long Island. My colleagues and I are committed to getting the facts, thoroughly investigating all evidence of housing discrimination, and holding those who perpetuate it accountable. It is my hope that we can shed some much-needed light onto this situation, and take action to end discriminatory real estate practices once and for all.”

Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Housing, said, “My Senate colleagues and I are committed to gathering all relevant information and insight necessary to enact legislation to address the very troubling and apparently widespread discriminatory practices uncovered by Newsday’s investigation and discussed at our December hearing. These subpoenas are an important step towards achieving that goal. I look forward to continuing our work with Leader Stewart-Cousins, Senators Skoufis and Thomas, our Senate colleagues, and everyone who is committed to ensuring fair and equal access to housing on Long Island and throughout New York.”

Senator James Skoufis, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Investigations and Government Operations, said, “Newsday’s investigation revealed blatant discrimination, plain and simple. Due to the fact so many of the realtors and their firms refused to appear and answer for their actions at our December hearing, we are taking the extraordinary step of issuing legislative subpoenas. There was an easy way and a hard way for these witnesses to cooperate; it is unfortunate they chose the hard way. Subpoenaed individuals are obliged to attend our April hearing, provide testimony, and submit any information and documents that the Senate requests. Failure to do so will result in legal action. The Senate’s Investigations and Government Operations Committee, in partnership with Senators Kavanagh and Thomas, is working to get to the bottom of what happened, how it happened, and why it happened on Long Island. The Senate majority is determined to exercise our legislative prerogative on behalf of the people we serve, including employing tools that have been traditionally underutilized. These legislative subpoenas demonstrate that we will not tolerate individuals or their companies that attempt to thumb their nose at our efforts. I look forward to questioning our witnesses in April.”

Senator John Brooks said, “As we come to further understand the alarming revelations by Newsday on Long Island’s housing market, the need for further investigation becomes more and more necessary. The Newsday report shed light on the problem that has pervaded our

communities for years and we are now embarking on the process that will bring us the hows and the whys. These next steps are about getting answers.”

Senator Jim Gaughran said, “Newsday’s investigation revealed a horrifying and pervasive pattern of discrimination in Long Island’s housing market. We, the public officials charged with making laws to eliminate these actions, were not able to hear directly from those entrenched in the day-to-day industry, because they had the audacity to blow off the State Senate’s hearing on this important topic. I thank Leader Stewart-Cousins for her leadership ensuring we hold these agents feet to the fire and demand answers to root out the horrific discrimination that remains pervasive in our own backyard.”

Senator Todd Kaminsky said, “These subpoenas are an important step in holding those realtors accountable for their discriminatory housing practices. We are conducting a complete review of a corrupted system and deciding what legislative action will be taken to protect homebuyers on Long Island regardless of who they are.”

Senator Anna M. Kaplan said, “The Newsday investigation unearthed unacceptable predatory practices in the real estate industry on Long Island and New Yorkers deserve answers. Every person, regardless of background or ethnicity, deserves to live where they want and have the ability to pursue the American dream. My colleagues and I remain committed to getting to the bottom of the alarming real estate practices on Long Island and stand against discrimination in all forms.”

Senator Monica Martinez said, “Discrimination of any sort in our communities is abhorrent and reprehensible. Any perceived injustices, or reports of alleged discrimination, must be taken seriously and be immediately and thoroughly investigated.”