



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

Senate Announces Second Joint Public Hearing To Investigate Housing Discrimination On Long Island

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September 14, 2020

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(Albany, NY) The Senate today announced it will hold a second joint public hearing on housing discrimination on Long Island, as uncovered by a Newsday investigation. The Senate Committees on Consumer Protection, Housing, and Investigations and Government Operations previously held a hearing to determine how best to address this unacceptable situation. The Senate Majority took the rare step of issuing subpoenas and compelling testimony from individuals and organizations who were invited to testify at the first hearing but refused to attend or submit testimony. This follow-up hearing was initially scheduled for April 17, but had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will now be held virtually on September 17, 2020 at 10:00 AM.

“There is no place in New York for housing discrimination and predatory practices, and the work of the Senate Majority continues despite the challenges of this pandemic,” Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. “The individuals and groups subpoenaed by the Senate Majority refused to participate in our first hearing to discuss the Newsday investigation. With their participation, as well as the insight from fair housing experts, the Senate Majority will be better informed as we work to end racist and biased housing practices throughout New York State.”

Senator Kevin Thomas, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Consumer Protection, said, “We cannot and will not accept unequal treatment of home buyers anywhere in New York State, especially on Long Island. These subpoenas demonstrate our commitment to thoroughly investigating all evidence of housing

discrimination, and holding those who perpetuate it accountable. The testimony provided at this important hearing will help us develop meaningful policies to protect every family's right to pursue the dream of home ownership."

Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Housing, said, "We're committed to gathering all relevant testimony and enacting 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 Thomas and Skoufis, 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 first hearing, we took 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 upcoming 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, remains committed to getting to the bottom of what happened, how it happened, and why it happened on Long Island. I look forward to questioning our witnesses in the coming weeks."

Senator John Brooks said, "If the last several months have taught us anything, it is that inherent and systemic racism is still an ugly part of our civic make-up as Americans. The alarming revelations by Newsday about Long Island's housing market may have been temporarily sidelined by the pandemic but they have not gone away. The Newsday report shed light on the problem that has pervaded our communities for generations and we must now continue the process that will bring us the hows and the whys. These next steps are about getting answers and bringing accountability."

Senator Jim Gaughran said, "Last year's bombshell investigation revealed a horrifying and pervasive pattern of discrimination in Long Island's housing market.

This year we took the first step towards ending 'steering' by passing my legislation -- now law -- to suspend or revoke the license of real estate agents who violate NYS's Human Rights law. This next hearing will bring these real estate companies -- who had the audacity to blow off our first hearing -- before the public to answer for their practices. Discrimination has no place in New York."

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 corrupt 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, "The investigation Newsday conducted revealed at minimum there are questions that must be answered. For some, there is a need for further investigation and inquiry into their business practices and determine if they have engaged in acts of discrimination. Any sort of discrimination in our communities is reprehensible and must be taken seriously and be thoroughly investigated."

In addition to compelled testimony from individuals and organizations who refused to participate in the first joint public hearing on housing discrimination, the September 17 hearing is also expected to include testimony from experts on the topics of fair housing laws, best practices for ensuring compliance, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on fair housing, and related matters. The proceedings will be conducted virtually and may be viewed [here](#).