



THE Gavel



The Official Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus

State Representative Napoleon Nelson, *Chairman*

SUMMER 2024

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Rising Higher Together



There is a common expression that leaders, deferential to those that came before them, often recite; “Standing on the shoulders of giants.” I use it frequently, honoring family members from generations ago and leaders whose pictures hang in ornate frames or whose names are uttered regularly in the retellings of our story. Those giants were, without question, the real deal and no organization or movement worth its salt should ever lose sight of how high we collectively stand and who got us here. It’s just not often, though, that you get to work right alongside those giants and stand on their shoulders as they continue to reach higher.

That proximity to giants accurately describes my 2023-24 legislative term. My Harrisburg office is on the third floor of the Irvis Office Building and was no more than 100 feet from

Chairman Stephen Kinsey’s desk and even closer to that of Chairwoman Donna Bullock. Both of these great public servants led the PA Legislative Black Caucus during their time in Harrisburg. Both of these great public servants understood the legacy of the Caucus and were led by the calling of tireless advocacy for Black folk. Both were very well regarded in the halls of the Capitol, and even more so in the neighborhoods that they call home. And both of these great public servants chose to resign from the Legislature in July of 2024, focusing their craft more exclusively on the work to be done within Philadelphia.

To Chairs Kinsey and Bullock, on behalf of the Caucus and our extended family of alumni and stakeholders throughout this Commonwealth, we wish you great success in your next chapters. We look forward to celebrating you again in Harrisburg in the fall and will, undoubtedly see you again marching on the Mercer-tiled hallways of the Capitol advocating for our people.

With respect and love from atop the shoulders of giants,

Rep. Napoleon Nelson



Momnibus Legislation



Lt. Governor Austin Davis (D) with the members of PLBC and the Black Maternal Health Caucus during Black Maternal Health Week.

The PA Momnibus is a comprehensive legislative package, crafted for Pennsylvania to directly confront the staggering rate of Black maternal mortality and morbidity in our Commonwealth. The Momnibus addresses critical disparities in maternal healthcare, including measures that would improve access to essential services and eliminate maternal health deserts. The package of legislation would establish programs to tackle social determinants of health and provide essential resources and support to new moms and postpartum people. Together, these proposals represent a significant step toward promoting maternal health equity and ensuring the well-being of all moms and birthing people in Pennsylvania.

HB1608 – Extends Medicaid coverage for doula services and establishes a Doula Advisory Board.

HB1618 – Requires health insurance to cover doula services.

HB2097 – Requires Medicaid to cover blood pressure monitors for pregnant and postpartum enrollees.

HB2138 – Requires health insurance to cover blood pressure monitors for pregnant and postpartum enrollees.

HB2136 – Designates maternal health deserts to target investments in maternal health care services.

HB2127 – Enhances access to mental health care services for pregnant and postpartum patients.

HB2178 – Requires health-related boards within the Department of State to complete implicit bias training.

HB2137 – Establishes the Maternal and Newborn Supply Kit Program to distribute essential resources to new moms and parents.

Clean Slate 3.0



House Bill 689 – Act No. 36 of 2023

The Clean Slate Act has facilitated the sealing of over 40 million cases in Pennsylvania, representing an innovative approach to record clearance. Leveraging advanced technology, the program automatically identifies eligible records for clearance, eliminating the need for court appearances, fees, or paperwork. Everyone deserves a chance at a fresh start; our nation is built on second chances. House Majority Appropriations Chair Jordan A. Harris, creator of the Clean Slate Act, is a firm advocate on criminal justice reform expansion, providing opportunities to those who've earned second chances and fostering fairness within the system. In 2018, Pennsylvania enacted groundbreaking legislation with the introduction of the inaugural Clean Slate bill in the nation. This law automatically seals the records of minor non-violent offenses from public disclosure for individuals who

remain free of convictions for ten years. In 2020, Pennsylvania enhanced and extended the scope of this legislation.



Police Data Reporting

PAUL MILLER'S LAW

ENHANCED DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY

(while operating an interactive wireless communication device)

Paul Miller lost his life to a distracted driver. His mother worked tirelessly with state legislators to prohibit drivers from holding cellphones or other electronic devices in an effort to keep Pennsylvania drivers safe. Paul Miller's law also addresses biased policing by requiring law enforcement to collect data on drivers stopped during traffic stops, including race, ethnicity and gender. Supported by Gov. Josh Shapiro and the Legislative Black Caucus, this law is part of the Shapiro Administration's efforts to enhance public trust in law enforcement across Pennsylvania. This data will be made publicly available in an annual report.



Housing

On April 9, 2024, the PLBC conducted a press conference to emphasize fair housing in conjunction with Second Chance Month. Accessible and affordable housing is an essential need that remains elusive for many individuals. Studies on housing and its impact on the Black community reveal a significant increase in homelessness rates. Pathways to Housing PA reports that the proportion of Black individuals experiencing homelessness is three times greater than their share of the general population. PLBC Members' housing achievements within the budget include:

- \$5 million for Right to Counsel for PA tenants
- A \$10 million increase for the Homelessness Assistance program
- A \$50 million increase for the Whole Home Repairs program
- Rep. Justin Fleming (D-Dauphin) Removing Racially Restrictive Deed Covenants (Act 54 of 2023)
- Rep. Ismail Smith-Wade-El (D-Lancaster), secured a \$67K state grant for the Lancaster Redevelopment Fund, for the emergency shelter at the Otterbein United Methodist Church







Captured



REBR

Captured





PLBC Members at the Speaker K. Leroy Irvis Days of Action

Third K. Leroy Irvis Days of Action

May 23rd has been designated as K. Leroy Irvis Day of Action at the Capitol, to celebrate the anniversary of Former Representative Irvis' election to Speaker of the Pennsylvania House. K. Leroy Irvis was the first African American to be Speaker of the PA House and the first African American Speaker in any state legislature since Reconstruction. This year, we celebrated Former State Representative K. Leroy Irvis with a two-day event:

Wednesday May 22nd, 2024

- Chat and Chew Breakfast Panel hosted by South Central PA Sickle Cell Council and Pfizer
- Speaker K. Leroy Irvis 47th Inaugural Press Conference
- Chairman's Reception
- PLBC Speaker K. Leroy Irvis Welcome Dinner

Thursday, May 23rd, 2024

- Breakfast with the Pennsylvania Legislative Latino Caucus
- PLBC & PA Policy Committee Hearing: Black Educator Pipeline
- Incarcerated Voter Disenfranchisement
- The Cannabis Conversation: Social Justice: The Movement of Inclusivity
- Advancing racial and equitable understanding in our communities: Hosted by Wallingford-Strathmore Student Ambassadors
- Accessible Housing
- James R. Roebuck Scholarship Awards Luncheon
- Health Equity Panel Sponsored by Incyte
- Small Businesses and Banking, Hosted by PA Community Bankers



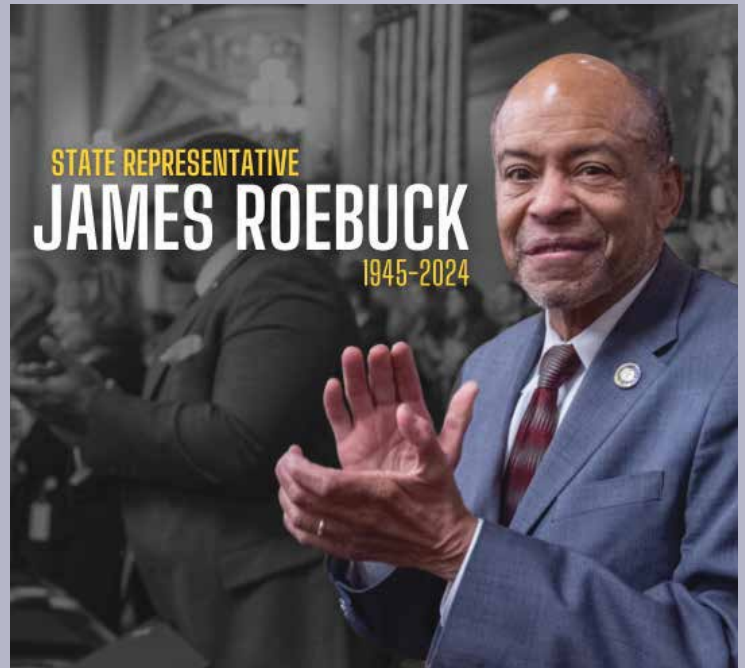
In Honor of State Representative James R. Roebuck Jr.

James R. Roebuck Jr., born in Philadelphia on February 12, 1945; and a 1963 graduate of Central High School, Roebuck earned a degree at Virginia University in 1966 before earning his master's degree at the University of Virginia in 1969. While at UVA, Roebuck became the first Black president of its student council.

From 1970 to 1977, he was a lecturer at Drexel University. Then he was an assistant professor of history at the college until 1984. In the same year, Roebuck worked as a legislative assistant to former Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode.

Roebuck won a special election on May 21, 1985, to represent the 188th District in the Pennsylvania House and was re-elected 17 times. He fought for many causes, most notably to ensure all Pennsylvania students could receive a quality education. Throughout the commonwealth, he was known as a person who wanted to do his best to improve his community.

In his political life, Roebuck was the chair of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (1998-2000), and the House Education Committee. He was also appointed to the Task Force on Higher Education Funding, the Public-School Building Construction and Reconstruction Advisory Committee, the Special Education Funding Commission, and the Higher Education Funding Commission. From 1995 to 2020, he served on the board of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency. In 2022, the then-chair of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, State Representative Donna Bullock, named the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Foundation Scholarship the "James R. Roebuck Scholarship



Awards" for high school seniors and first year college/ university students.

His wife, Cheryl Roebuck, was a veteran music teacher, and worked for the School District of Philadelphia for over thirty years. She was active in her West Philadelphia community for over twenty years. She has served as the secretary of the University City Arts League and was a board member of the Garden Court Community Association.

Both were committed to their neighborhood. Rep. Roebuck was a true professional, a good person and will be missed.

The PLBC 2024 James R. Roebuck Scholarship



The PLBC scholarship was established in 2009 during the tenure of then-chair, Representative Ron Waters. In 2021, it was renamed in honor of former State Representative and PLBC Chair, James R. Roebuck. Since then, numerous students from across the Commonwealth have been recipients of this prestigious award.

This year, we were honored to confer this award upon 20 exceptionally talented scholars, several of whom joined us for our Luncheon during the 3rd Annual PLBC K. Leroy Irvis Day of Action.



PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

2023-24



Napoleon Nelson
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154th Legislative District



Darisha K. Parker
Vice-Chair
198th Legislative District



Ismail Smith-Wade-El
Secretary
49th Legislative District



Justin C. Fleming
Treasurer
105th Legislative District



Tarik Khan
Subcommittee Chair
194th District



Rick Krajewski
Subcommittee Chair
188th District



La'Tasha D. Mayes
Subcommittee Chair
24th District



Regina G. Young
Subcommittee Chair
185th District



Aerion A. Abney
19th District



Anthony Bellmon
203rd District



Amen Brown
10th District



Donna Bullock
195th District



Danilo Burgos
197th District



**Johanny
Cepeda-Freytiz**
129th District



Morgan Cephas
192nd District



Gina H. Curry
164th District



Jason Dawkins
179th District



Jose Giral
180th District



G. Roni Green
190th District



Manny Guzman
127th District



Jordan A. Harris
186th District



Art Haywood
Senate District 4



Carol Hill-Evans
95th District



Vincent J. Hughs
Senate District 7



Carol Kazeem
159th District



Malcolm Kenyatta
181st District



Patty Kim
103rd District



Stephen Kinsey
201st District



David Madsen
104th District



Joanna E. McClinton
191st District
Speaker



Lindsay Powell
21st District



Chris Rabb
200th District



Nikil Saval
Senate District 1



Greg Scott
54th District



Sharif Street
Senate District 3



Arvind Venkat, MD
30th District



Anthony H. Williams
Senate District 8



Dan Williams
74th District