
Public Hearing

before

SENATE STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 134

(Proposes constitutional amendment to clarify provision denying right of suffrage to certain persons lacking capacity to understand the act of voting)

LOCATION: Committee Room 7
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: February 8, 2007
1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Joseph Coniglio, Chair
Senator Nicholas P. Scutari, Vice Chair
Senator Loretta Weinberg
Senator Nicholas Asselta
Senator Leonard T. Connors Jr.



ALSO PRESENT:

Frank J. Parisi
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide

Christian Martin
Senate Majority
Committee Aide

Victoria Brogan
Senate Republican
Committee Aide

Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
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SENATOR JOSEPH CONIGLIO (Chair): The next bill we'll take today is SCR-134, the Codey/Bark bill. And we will have a public hearing on that bill.

I just want to make a statement that we did hear testimony the other day from a lot of people that are here. I can tell you that we were supportive. But if anyone else would like to speak today on behalf of this bill, add anything we haven't heard, we'd be glad to move forward.

Kim Coll.

I just want to say something. There are about 20-some-odd people here, some of them who spoke the other day. Kim, I don't believe, is one of those people that spoke the other day. Most of the people are in favor of this bill. To expedite this bill, if we could -- read the names of the people that are supportive after hearing two or three of the people, we would greatly appreciate that.

Senators, do you agree?

SENATOR ASSELTA: Absolutely.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Go ahead, Kim.

K I M C O L L: (Testimony is indiscernible. Please refer to the written testimony for this witness, located in the Appendix, Page 1x.)

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Thank you very much, Kim.

Any questions, Senators?

SENATOR CONNORS: Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Yes.

SENATOR CONNORS: May I be excused? I have another meeting.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Okay. Did you leave your vote, Senator?

SENATOR CONNORS: Yes, I left my vote. I'm certainly in favor of this bill.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: I appreciate that Senator. Thank you.

Thank you, Kim.

Next person we'll hear from is Sandra L. Matsen.

S A N D R A L. M A T S E N: (speaking from audience) I submitted testimony in support. So if that could be on the record.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Please come forward and state your name. I'd appreciate that.

State your name for the record. That's all.

MS. MATSEN: Sandra Matsen, League of Women Voters of New Jersey, in support of SCR-134.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Thank you very much.

Now we're going to hear one more person on this bill today, and that person's name is Art Ball.

Is Art here?

A R T B A L L: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the New Jersey Center for Outreach and Services for the Autism Community, we would simply like to offer our support for this bill.

Thank you.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Thank you.

What we're going to do is--

Yes.

SUE GOTTESMAN: (speaking from audience) I'm sorry. I apologize for being late.

I'm sorry for just getting here. I just wanted to say that I was here on behalf of Ron Chen, the Public Advocate, very briefly again, to reiterate our support for SCR-134. And we're available to assist in any way we can.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Thank you.

Could you give your name, please?

MS. GOTTESMAN: Sue Gottesman, G-O-T-T-E-S-M-A-N.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Do you have that? (affirmative response)

MS. GOTTESMAN: Thanks.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Thank you.

Now I'm going to have Frank read the rest of the names that are in favor of this bill into the record, and then I'm going to move for a motion.

MR. PARISI (Committee Aide): Okay. Those who have said -- left a form and said they were in favor of the bill -- I'll read the name and the address: Diane Jones, Aktion Club of Building Bridges, Highland Park, New Jersey; I think this is Hoya (indicating pronunciation) Finley, Burlington.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Hope Finley.

MR. PARISI: Oh, Hope Finley. I'm sorry. Hope Finley, of Burlington, New Jersey; Luke Koppisch, New Jersey Council on

Developmental Disabilities, Monday Morning Project, Trenton, New Jersey; Rebecca Schaefer, New Jersey ADAPT; Joan Meyers, Seeking Ways Out Together; Mildred Brill, Howell, New Jersey; Michael Brill, also of Howell, New Jersey; Kerry Walker, of Cinnaminson, New Jersey; David Kallman, Monday Morning Advocacy Network of Middlesex County, Metuchen, New Jersey.

Several people have indicated that they are in favor and did not wish to testify: Nancy Pinkin, New Jersey Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association; David Tag; Jessica Ganz, the ARC of New Jersey; Takeena Thomas, New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Frank, can I have a roll call, please, in support of this bill?

Yes, Senator.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I would just like to make a comment.

First of all, to the Chairman, for having gotten this bill moving along to this stage, and for your openness and patience in hearing the advocates.

At the last meeting, when we heard so many of the folks speak, it was really a moving experience, I think, for all of us on the Committee. And as I said then, and I think it bears repeating, if other citizens who have less problems to overcome would become as active in the civic life of their communities, this would be a much better state, I believe.

But I just can't help but make a comment. I see Diane Jones sitting in the middle of the front row with a little smile on her face.

If I want an advocate to go around the state to speak on my behalf, Ms. Jones, it's going to be you. When you put down your written

testimony and spoke from the heart, and raised your fist, you somehow appealed to that side of my personality. So I just want to say, again, thank you, to you in particular; and to all the other folks who came out here in cold weather, against all kinds of problems I know that you might have individually, to speak up on behalf of your own rights.

And I know I speak for all of us sitting here -- whosever phone is singing (referring to cell phone ringing) (laughter) -- that this is a very special occasion for all of us.

So thank you.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Thank you, Senator.

Roll call, Frank, please.

MR. PARISI: Okay. Senator Connors had indicated his support.

Senator Asselta.

SENATOR ASSELTA: Yes.

MR. PARISI: Senator Weinberg.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes.

MR. PARISI: Senator Scutari had indicated his support.

Senator Coniglio.

SENATOR CONIGLIO: Most definitely yes.

Thank you.

This meeting is adjourned.

Congratulations everyone. (applause)

(HEARING CONCLUDED)