



The New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators, Inc. (the Association) was organized more than three decades ago to bring elected officials, stakeholders, the business community, and community and faith-based leaders to New York's State Capitol annually to advocate for inclusion of communities of color in the state budget process; to gain an understanding of that process. ***This fundamental goal has not changed, nor will it, nor should it ever be.***

The right to convene annually as Black and Brown members with our constituents was earned and envisioned by those who came to Albany before us in the 1960s – a significant part of the civil rights victories achieved nationally at the time – and its current board of directors strive to honor the Association's legacy and history. The Association was formally organized in 1985. ***As the Association embarks on its next 50-year mission, with an expanded membership body, its corporate structure is being updated, and its financial operations and condition have been strengthened to withstand any upcoming challenge.***

There have been recent reports about the involvement of the Office of the New York State Attorney General (NYAG) with the Association. Yes, that is the case. In January 2019, the Association inquired about the status of its prior financial filings with the NYAG, and discussions were initiated in that regard (including discussions to bring the Association's corporate structure into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century). Since then, the Association has been involved in a rigorous process of corporate restructuring, and financial analysis, planning and reporting. As is common knowledge, the Charities Bureau of the NYAG is responsible for supervising all nonprofit organizations registered within the State of New York. The Charities Bureau also makes itself available to nonprofits, to provide guidance on corporate governance, reporting and other matters. The Association is no exception. ***Today, to the best of our knowledge, the Association is current as to its tax reporting requirements with the Charities Bureau, as well as with the Internal Revenue Service.***

Under the current board's leadership, and with the support of our sponsors, registrants and attendees, the Association attended to more than \$200,000 in outstanding debt, including the allocation and disbursement of over \$60,000 dollars in scholarship grants to students across New York State, while delivering conventions that address the issues facing our communities in these times. ***We share with you, with confidence, that even though there is still work to be done, the Association stands ready to champion its attention to compliance with regulators, and to advance its mission for 2020 and the coming decades!*** Today, we say with confidence that even though the more challenging part of our efforts were undertaken in 2019, in 2020, we aim to implement changes and provide assurances that are commensurate with the confidence that you and our communities have placed in the Association in the past.

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The current board was elected unanimously to lead the Association. We honorably accepted this role as a vote of confidence from our colleagues that we'd lead this organization through a necessary reorganization and restructuring, to ensure that it is fiscally sound, properly organized, and in good-standing with any and all authorizing agencies. This we remembered as we recognized the achievements and sacrifices of Dr. Martin Luther King Day this past Monday, January 21, 2020.

In 2019, the Association engaged the services of a highly-respected national accounting firm to guide the Association on its financial-reporting matters; and also engaged the services of experienced corporate counsel to guide the board of directors in our corporate and membership restructuring initiatives. We take this opportunity to share with you that the Association's restructuring team – its board of directors, executive director, members and professional service providers -- aim to position this invaluable and historic vessel in 2020, in order to continue acknowledging and celebrating our diverse communities and issues. ***Is this the required restructuring we promised – changes necessitated by what we've encountered when the new board was instituted – going forward? You bet it is. The Association will survive, thrive, meet its goals, and deliver its purpose and mission.***

In fact, the membership of the Association and supervising agencies have been confident in our leadership, ability and the positive direction in which the Association's restructuring is moving. We are humbled every day by this awesome and inspiring responsibility of caretaking this priceless gem for our communities and supporters across New York State.

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We once again ask you to join in the next phase of the Association's journey. ***We look forward to convening and collaborating with you at the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Legislative Conference, scheduled to hold February 14 – 17, 2020.***

Most important, we take this opportunity to thank you for all of the support that you've entrusted in the Association in the past; it goes without saying that if any of you have questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact the office of the New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators, Inc. at (518) 427-8363.



***Hon. Latrice M. Walker  
Chair  
January 23, 2020***