

Friends of Liberty State Park Statement on the Governor's signing A3969

Governor Christie should have conditionally vetoed A3969 and totally removed the LSP language. The public's voice in the last few weeks and the broad public consensus throughout park history has been for a free non-privatized/non-commercialized park behind Lady Liberty as a legacy to future generations. The Friends of LSP and all the people who called the Governor's office and the coalition of 57 local, regional and statewide groups organized by the Jersey City Parks Coalition had urged him to totally remove the LSP language.

The Meadowlands development commission (MRC) should have nothing at all to do with LSP, and its involvement will facilitate the park being threatened by privatization plans.

The Friends of LSP are pleased that the bill's sponsors, Asm Prieto and Sen Sarlo called LSP a special part of our American heritage and pledged to introduce will new legislations that will clarify that the DEP still owns the park and that the commission can only review LSP plans. The public should have the opportunity to express themselves on the language in the new bill before it is finalized. We are also pleased that the Governor acknowledged signing an "imperfect bill".

It is heartening that people put democracy into action and expressed themselves on this major park threat and that it did make a difference with the Governor.

The Friends of Liberty State Park and all park supporters will need to be vigilant every step of the way to fight against every ill-conceived privatization plan which the DEP and Commission will be reviewing and the DEP should reject any plan for LSP which doesn't have a broad public consensus after public hearings and a public comment period. The voice of The People must be heeded to ensure that the great gift of an open space park is left to future generations to enjoy behind our nation's greatest symbol of freedom and democracy.

The Friends will be urging the bill's sponsors to adopt this language for their new bill:

- Only the NJDEP has the authority to approve or implement any plan or plans or special events for Liberty State Park.
- If the MRC has a meeting agenda item regarding LSP, then that issue must be discussed at a public meeting at Liberty State Park.
- NJDEP may seek bonding assistance from the Meadowlands Regional Commission (MRC) - only after public hearings/public comment periods for any plan.
- As an alternative to bonding through MRC, the NJDEP may seek bonding assistance from the Economic Development Authority as it has done before.
- The NJDEP shall reconvene the LSP Public Advisory Committee to meet regularly, as a forum for LSP stakeholders, to evaluate plans and provide advice to the NJDEP before public hearings and public comment periods for plans.

LSP is an American landmark, legacy and symbol with 39 years of the broad public consensus for a free open space accessible park behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island. LSP is a park for the People behind Lady Liberty and not private property to exploit.