



## NEWS FROM NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE DEMOCRATS

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### **Mukherji, Cunningham Introduce “Liberty State Park Protection Act” Preserving NJ Open Space & History**

(TRENTON) – Ensuring the preservation of Liberty State Park as a public green open space for all New Jersey residents to enjoy, Assemblyman Raj Mukherji and Senator Sandra Cunningham has introduced legislation, the “Liberty State Park Protection Act,” to establish an advisory committee and requirements for the state Department of Environmental Protection action protecting the site from privatization and inappropriate development.

Liberty State Park, located in Jersey City, is a priceless New Jersey and American treasure and recreational area located in the middle of densely populated metropolitan northern New Jersey.

“It’s time we enshrined in the law the protection of Liberty State Park as a free, open, urban green oasis,” said Assembly Majority Whip Raj Mukherji (D-Hudson). “The park is a national treasure and the keeper of this country’s diverse, rich history with markers that have guided generations of citizens and attracted people from all over the world.”

Assemblyman Mukherji added, “A rare open space jewel in a densely populated urban county and one of only two places in the world from which Ellis Island and Lady Liberty can be accessed, she enhances the quality of life of urban families and visitors from everywhere. Future generations deserve to enjoy Liberty State Park as open space.”

With internationally-recognized landmarks including the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island, and the Manhattan skyline as a backdrop, Liberty State Park is one of the nation’s most historically, inspiring parks. Encompassing over 1,200 acres, approximately 600 acres

of land and 600 acres of water, of which all but the interior's 235 acres are open to the public, the park contains significant natural, historic, recreational, scenic, and cultural resources.

"Liberty State Park is a beacon of hope that represents all that America has to offer," said Senator Cunningham (D-Hudson). "Tourists are drawn to the beautiful markers and rich history but for Jersey City residents it is a plot of much needed green space in the concrete landscape. This legislation will ensure that the park remains a recreational area free for everyone to enjoy."

The members note in the bill that Liberty State Park has unfortunately been the target of repeated privatization and commercialization proposals since the park opened, and the focus of a number of inappropriate development proposals in recent years. This measure would protect Liberty State Park from any future proposals to commercialize or privatize the state and national treasure.

The bill (A-4903 and S-3357), recently introduced in the Assembly and Senate, would create the Liberty State Park Advisory Committee charged with assisting the DEP in conserving, preserving, protecting, and improving the park. In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee would give consideration to the natural, historic, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources and the local, State, and national significance of Liberty State Park.

In addition, the legislation would prohibit the DEP from considering any proposal to commercialize, develop, or privatize Liberty State Park, except as provided in the bill. Under the bill's provisions, DEP would be allowed to approve a concession, conveyance, lease, or other agreement with a private entity to provide small-scale commercial activities that directly enhance the experience of a visitor to Liberty State Park, such as a bicycle or kayak rental concession, food concession, temporary winter skating rink, commercial boat tour operating from an existing boat slip, and use of the Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal ("CRRNJ Terminal"), and other uses identified in a management plan. The bill also requires the DEP, whenever it proposes to enter into a concession, lease, or other agreement for a duration of one year or longer, to provide a full public process with public hearings and a public comment period.

The bill specifically prohibits any concession, conveyance, or lease within the 235-acre natural restoration area in the interior of Liberty State Park, and at Caven Point Peninsula.

The DEP would be required, within three years after the bill is enacted into law, to develop a management plan for Liberty State Park in consultation with the committee.