



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin Thomas

Senator Kevin Thomas Co-Authors Investigative Report on Housing Discrimination on Long Island

KEVIN THOMAS January 27, 2021

| ISSUE: **HOUSING, HOUSING DISCRIMINATION, FAIR HOUSING, LONG ISLAND**

| COMMITTEE: **CONSUMER PROTECTION**



(Albany, NY) – Senator Kevin Thomas, Chair of the Consumer Protection Committee, along with Senator James Skoufis, Chair of the Investigations and Government Operations Committee and Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Housing, Construction and Community Development Committee, today released a 97-page report on fair housing and discrimination on Long Island. The report, which includes investigative findings and legislative recommendations, is the product of a year-long joint investigation into evidence of unequal treatment, steering, and bias directed at minority homebuyers and minority communities on Long Island uncovered in a 2019 Newsday report entitled *Long Island Divided*.

The three Senate committees developed the comprehensive report based on multiple public hearings, testimony from stakeholders, document requests, Newsday's findings, policy meetings, and committee research. The Committees' recommendations are intended to address housing discrimination that manifests in many forms and occurs in all aspects of the industry including rentals as well as real estate sales.

The committees' top-line recommendations are:

- **Develop a New York State Fair Housing Strategy**
- **More Proactive Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws**, including additional testing, increased funding to support fair housing efforts, and statewide collection of demographic data
- **Licensing and Renewal Training Requirements**, including enhanced training for licensed real estate agents and brokers
- **Increased Penalties and Broader Accountability**, including improved broker supervision of agents
- **Brokerage Industry Reforms**, promoting more diversity within the industry

The Senate intends to advance a package of fair housing legislation in the coming weeks pursuant to the recommendations in the investigative report.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, "When the Newsday investigation uncovered widespread housing discrimination on Long Island, the Senate Majority committed to address this unacceptable, predatory practice. We held hearings, issued subpoenas, and compelled testimony to get to the bottom of these allegations, because we know that racist and biased housing practices need to be confronted and eliminated on Long Island and throughout New York State. The report issued by Senator Skoufis, Senator Kavanagh, and Senator Thomas, is a comprehensive review of the actions taken by the Senate Majority and the information we gather because of these hearings. I commend the committee chairs for their diligent work and leadership on this issue of fundamental fairness, and I look forward to taking more action to ensure every New York resident has a fair shot at achieving the American Dream of home ownership."

Senator Kevin Thomas, Chair of the Consumer Protection Committee said, “Fair housing is a right shared by all New Yorkers. In 2019, Newsday published the results of one of the most concentrated investigations into housing discrimination since the enactment of the landmark Fair Housing Act. What they uncovered was eye-opening, tangible evidence of unequal treatment, steering, and bias directed at minority homebuyers and minority communities on Long Island. In response, the New York State Senate launched an intensive investigation of our own. This report is the culmination of our efforts to shed light on pervasive issues within the real estate industry and develop meaningful solutions to ensure fair housing opportunities for all New York residents. I thank Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Senator Kavanagh, and Senator Skoufis for their leadership and continued commitment to addressing and ending housing discrimination in all forms. Now more than ever, we must remain steadfast in protecting fair housing rights.”

Senator James Skoufis, Chair of the Investigations and Government Operations Committee said, “Newsday’s exposé revealed egregious discrimination and it is our duty as elected officials to get to the bottom of what happened, how it happened, why it happened, and how we can prevent it from happening again. We all share a responsibility to ensure fair housing laws are robust, properly funded, and enforced so that all New Yorkers are treated with dignity and fairness. I thank our Senate Majority Leader and my fellow committee chairs who have collaborated over the past many months to develop real, tangible solutions to tackle these issues head-on.”

Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Housing, Construction and Community Development Committee said, “Our report details the very troubling and apparently widespread discriminatory practices that occurred on Long Island, and undoubtedly in other parts of the state, along with our recommendations on what must be done to replace New York’s patchwork, inadequate approach to this problem with a comprehensive statewide strategy. The State and all stakeholders in the housing industry must come together and commit ourselves to affirmatively further fair housing practices, for the benefit of all New Yorkers. The recommendations contained in this report will enable us to ensure effective implementation and compliance with New York State’s fair housing laws and hopefully usher in a new era of transparency and accountability in our housing industry for the benefit of prospective homebuyers and renters, and all of our communities.”

The full report is available on the New York State Senate website at the following link:

https://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/article/attachment/fair_housing_and_discriminati

###

RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S715

Fair Housing, Real Estate, Real Estate Brokers

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Relates to enforcement of fair housing

January 04, 2021

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Kevin Thomas**

Do you support this bill?

2021-S2157

Fair Housing, Real Estate, Real Estate Brokers

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Relates to associate real estate brokers serving as real estate office managers

January 20, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by Kevin Thomas

Do you support this bill?