

UNITED BLACK LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

A collection of value, priority and policy proposals grounded by communities of African Descent in the state of Minnesota.

Leaders from black communities throughout the state of Minnesota are working together to address the state's growing racial disparities. This effort has led to a collaborative, movement-building effort where legislative priorities are created by the organizations, leaders and community members who are directly impacted by the inequities we seek to change. This legislative agenda is intended to provide a set of pragmatic policy solutions, led and shaped by the black community and endorsed by a broad range of community partners. With a state budget surplus of nearly \$1 billion, we believe that there is no better time to align our legislative priorities with the deliberate and specific needs of our most under resourced communities.

We support the funding, capacity building and technical assistance needed to resource our black led organizations. This includes programs and initiatives required to ensure that our communities we have sufficient resources to address the growing racial disparity gaps in Minnesota.

Economic Justice

- 1) *Working Families Agenda*; authored by Rep. Paul Thissen & Sen. Sandy Pappas (HF1093/SF1085)

Workers and families deserve to understand their schedules for their coming week so they can plan life, a guarantee that they will be paid for the hours they work and not stolen from and the ability to earn time for their loved ones when they are sick. The Working Families Agenda does all of those things.

- 2) *Youth and Adult Workforce Investment*; proposed in Governor Dayton's 2016 supplemental Budget (no legislation as of yet)

Young African and African American children face unemployment rates significantly higher than their white counterparts. This lack of economic opportunity at a young age contributes to isolation, and non traditional economic alternatives. When our young people have opportunity, they become stronger members of our community.

Criminal Justice Reform

- 1) *Grand Jury Ban for Police Involved Deaths*; (bill being drafted, anticipated to be carried by Rep. Ray Dehn)

Grand Juries are an antiquated, ineffective process in our legal system that doesn't give the people any confidence in their outcomes.

- 2) *Ban Private Prisons*; authored by Rep. Debra Hilstrom and Sen. Ron Latz (HF2895/SF2768)

Corporations should not be allowed to profit on the backs of black and brown bodies in jail. There's a push on reforming drug sentences to ensure less people are entering the criminal justice system. Opening a new prison, private or public, would set the stage for people to stop fighting for lower drug possession sentences because they will be focused on filling the new prison.

- 3) *Voting Rights Restoration*; authored by Rep. Ray Dehn & Sen. Bobby Joe Champion (HF342/SF355)

47,000 Minnesotans are denied the right to vote after serving their time. Society has said these individuals have paid their debts. When released, they're expected to pay taxes, to society but are denied the ultimate voice in how taxes are spent or programs are run. That is wrong.

- 4) *Sentencing Guidelines Recommendations Adoption*; no legislation is needed for this to take effect; efforts to stop recommendations from taking effect should be blocked (no bill necessary).

The growth of inmates in our criminal justice system is unsustainable, disproportionately impacting black communities, and must end. The number of Minnesotans under Department of Corrections control has more than doubled just in the past two decades, at a time when crime is on the decline nationally. Simply put, we are locking up too many people and need change. Adoption of the Minnesota Sentencing Guideline Commission's Recommendations will be a step forward towards ending mass incarceration.

Immigrant Justice

- 1) *Hate Crimes Charges Increase*; authored by Rep. Debra Hilstrom and Sen. Ron Latz (HF2928/SF2680)

Islamophobia, anti-Muslim and Anti-Immigrant sentiments have been on the rise across the country, and Minnesota is not exempt from it's horrific consequences. Attacks motivated on people based on race are unacceptable and must be punished at heightened levels.

- 1) *Somali Education, Job Training & Youth Development*; (HF1515/SF1480, HF3054/SF1480)

East African Youth are too often seen as threats or individuals who are part of global and international problems, rather than key people in the future vitality and growth of our region. This must change. To change that, we must invest in these young people.

Education

- 1) *Funding for Full Service Community Schools*, proposed by the Governor (no legislation as of yet, HF1206)

- 2) *Invest in Teachers of Color and Diversifying the Teaching Pipeline*, proposed by the Governor (no legislation as of yet,)

Housing

- 1) *Downpayment Assistance to Close the Housing Gap*, proposed in the Governor's Budget (no legislation as of yet)
- 2) *Reform the Unlawful Detainer (UD) Process*