



Assemblyman

# Keith L.T. Wright

**Reports to the People**

## BEATING THE DRUM FOR JUSTICE AND INCLUSION



Housing Chairman Wright joins advocates in Albany to demand action on rent regulation laws.

The 2015 legislative session has come and gone, and many voices found themselves lost in the chaos. Unsurprisingly, the voice of Harlemites was not among those lost. In the hallways and stairwells of Albany's Capitol, in the offices of our representatives, in the streets of our City, your cries for fair housing, criminal justice reform and access to education echoed. And, due to your tremendous organizing and collective energy, progress was made.



Chairman Wright debates rent regulation legislation in the Assembly Chamber.

## Appointment of Special Prosecutor: a Step Towards Criminal Justice Reform

In 1999 Assemblyman Wright wrote legislation to grant the New York State Attorney General jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute cases of police misconduct. The motives behind the legislation were clear: the need for an unbiased arbiter was desperately needed. Sadly, this need is as prevalent as ever in 2015.

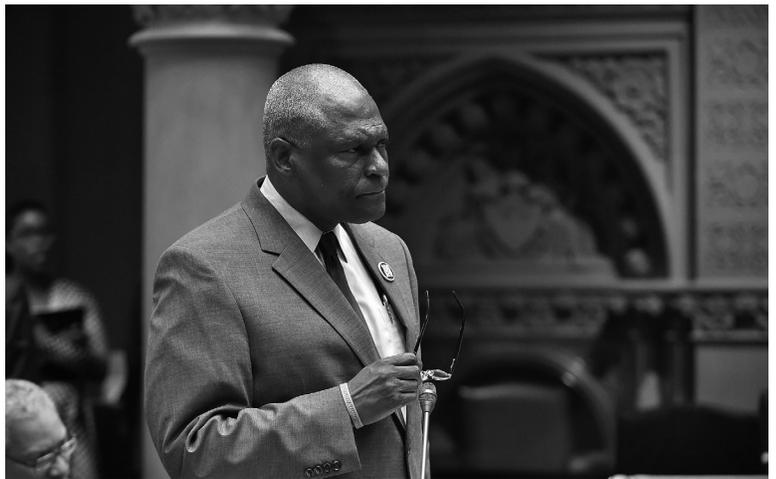
In late June, the Governor used his executive power to move forward with the Assemblyman's proposal, circumventing inaction from the New York State Senate. Decades later, following countless deaths, injuries and injustices on behalf of police, the Attorney General finally retains this ability. In response to Governor Cuomo's executive order, Assemblyman Wright said:

*"In the wake of widespread community outcry and countless instances of injustice, appointing the Attorney General as special prosecutor in cases of police misconduct is the right step for New York. For decades I have been championing this effort in the legislature, and I am confident this will help restore trust between our communities and the police while ensuring justice to victims of these heinous crimes. New Yorkers stand to benefit greatly from Governor Cuomo's executive action and I look forward to continuing our collective efforts to develop a permanent resolution that includes grand jury reform."*

While surely a victory, this is merely the tip of the iceberg for Wright and many of his colleagues in the Assembly. There are many ways to improve police accountability and better protect our citizens from misconduct or biased policing tactics and the Assembly believes that all New Yorkers deserve access to a clean and fair justice system.

Under Assemblyman Wright's leadership, this house passed a number of bills this session to help achieve this goal. The Assembly voted overwhelmingly to outlaw the use of ethnic and racial profiling by police. While many will be shocked to learn this is still a legal practice in New York, it is equally as shocking that other leaders do not support its ban.

As always, we will continue the fight for total accountability. Grand Jury reform, body camera requirements for police and coalition building among communities and those meant to protect us are examples of efforts the Assemblyman is undertaking to improve the current landscape.



Wright listens to questions in opposition to his legislation to outlaw racial and ethnic profiling among police.

## Historic Reforms made to Rent Regulation Laws

New York's housing crisis is an issue of social justice and one that everyone should be concerned about. Beyond the great necessity of keeping our families in their homes long-term, without dramatic reforms, we risk facing an unrecognizable city. We must work together to keep families from being displaced, to not oust residents whose families have called New York their home for decades, and to not deter innovators and dreamers from moving to the greatest city in the world.

Following many late nights, a hard-fought victory was achieved on behalf of millions of tenants. While Assemblyman Wright pushed for even stronger changes, June saw passage of the most comprehensive set of rent reforms in New York's history.

*Continued on page 3*



Included in the final legislation are the following:

- New York City's rent laws are extended for four more years. This provides over two million New York tenants safety and protection under the law.
- High rent threshold has been increased and indexed to inflation, making it much more difficult to remove units from rent regulation status.
- The vacancy decontrol limit was raised to \$2,700. Annual increases will be indexed to the Rent Guidelines Board.
- Increased and strengthening of civil penalties for unscrupulous landlords who harass tenants. Monetary penalties are now at \$3,000 per offense, and as much as \$11,000 if the harassment is to achieve vacancy.
- Changes to Major Capital Improvements are as follows – for buildings over 35 units, the MCI amortization period is now 108 months; for buildings under 35 units, that period is now 96 months.
- There is now a limit to the amount of rent landlords can legally charge tenants to be reimbursed for installations or improvements.
- To limit the rate that landlords flip units occupied by preferential renters, the legislation limits vacancy bonuses provided to landlords.



Wright rallies with laborers and advocates in Albany.



Assemblyman Wright welcomes New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio to Harlem during June rent rally on 125<sup>th</sup> Street.

## First Ever Rent Freeze Implemented by Rent Guidelines Board

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Rent Guidelines Board implemented its first-ever rent freeze on rent stabilized units throughout New York's 5 boroughs. A powerful move that is welcomed by so many New Yorkers who every day grapple with the skyrocketing cost of rent in New York, the freeze affords many of us valuable peace of mind. Larger than the immediate impact of the unprecedented decision, such an historic move signifies the larger problem of lack of affordability in housing for our residents. We are smack-dab in the middle of a housing crisis, and the issue is finally getting the recognition it needs.

On the decision, Assemblyman Wright said:

*“As a rent-stabilized Harlem resident and Chair of the Assembly’s Committee on Housing, I am eager to continue tackling the issues that hold families financially hostage and offer no flexibility to invest in and advance their futures. I look forward to furthering this victory in Albany next year as leaders, advocates and decision makers come to terms with the severity of our current situation.”*



(PS 175) Students from PS 175 in Harlem visit the Capitol and meet with Assemblyman Wright.



Harlem residents visit with Assemblyman Wright in Albany to discuss priorities for AARP and the elderly community across New York State.



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SUMMER 2015

## State Funding for NYCHA is a Victory for All

This year, the New York City Housing Authority saw \$100 million in state funding, an unprecedented amount that provides tremendous and greatly-needed improvements for residents and the larger community. With an estimated \$100 million operating

budget deficit and \$16 billion needed for capital improvement, this state funding, secured by Housing Chairman Wright, is a strong down payment and precedent for further funding and assistance.

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