



April 15, 2021

RE: DPSFV Supports Assembly Bill 256 [The California Racial Justice Act for All]

Representatives of the Honorable San Fernando Valley Delegation:

On behalf of the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley (DPSFV), we are pleased to report that our Executive Board voted to support AB 256, which will provide a mechanism for relief for those whose convictions or sentences were based upon race, ethnicity, or national origin. This bill will extend the essential protections of the California Racial Justice Act (AB 2542, 2020) to all Californians.

We urge you to please support this important piece of legislation.

DPSFV was founded in 1978 and is chartered by the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee. Our organization is the coordinating body for a coalition of twenty-one Democratic Clubs located in the six Assembly Districts (38, 39, 43, 45, 46, and 50) which are wholly or partially in the San Fernando Valley.

The DPSFV Political Action Committee met last month to discuss AB 256 and voted to recommend that the DPSFV Executive Board support this vital piece of legislation. The committee noted that, with the Racial Justice Act, California took a profound step forward in addressing institutionalized and implicit racial bias in our criminal courts by empowering defendants to object to charges, convictions, or punishment if they can show that anyone involved in their case — a judge, attorney, officer, expert witness or juror — demonstrated bias during the process, or if they can show statistical evidence of demographic inequities in charges, convictions, or sentences for the same crime. However, this legislation was prospective; it excluded those who had been harmed prior to January 1, 2021 by the racial bias and discrimination that has long permeated our criminal legal system.

If prohibiting racism in our courts and providing a person a means to remedy racial bias in their case is the right thing to do, it is the right thing to do for everyone. Those with prior, racially biased convictions and sentences deserve equal justice under the law and have waited long enough. Additionally, providing a mechanism for retroactive relief will allow the state to realize significant court and correctional savings.

We urge you to support AB 256. The California Racial Justice Act for All will make the Racial Justice Act retroactive to ensure that everyone is afforded an opportunity to pursue justice.

Please note that DPSFV will be tracking this bill as it travels through the Legislature. Your voting record will be noted and may be considered should you ever seek our endorsement. Your office is always welcome to contact DPSFV if you have any questions.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Chair Sean M. Rivas  
Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley

cc: Assembly Members Rivas, Friedman, Gabriel, Nazarian, Bloom, and Kalra (Author)  
Senators Hertzberg, Portantino, Stern and Allen

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