

Apr-04-07 Governor Signs Legislation Honoring New Jersey's First African-American State Senator and Assemblyman

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GOVERNOR SIGNS LEGISLATION HONORING NEW JERSEY'S FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN STATE SENATOR AND ASSEMBLYMAN

TRENTON – Governor Jon S. Corzine today signed a bill providing for the display of plaques in the Statehouse to honor former lawmakers Hutchins F. Inge and Walter Gilbert Alexander, New Jersey's first African-American state senator and assemblyman, respectively.

“Senator Hutchins Inge and Assemblyman Walter Gilbert Alexander were true trailblazers, men who through their struggle and example opened the doors of opportunity for countless New Jerseyans,” Governor Corzine said. **“They deserve our recognition and appreciation for expanding the reach of our democracy and ensuring that everyone has a voice and role in the political process.”**

Dr. Hutchins Inge was a physician who worked at United Presbyterian Hospital in Newark and represented Newark in the State Senate from 1966 through 1968. Senator Inge chaired the Senate Federal and Interstate Relations Committee and also served as director of the Essex Urban League. Dr. Inge was a graduate of the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy and the Howard University School of Medicine. He died in 2002.

“Assemblyman Alexander and Senator Inge are true pioneers, having broken the color barrier and blazed a trail for so many African-American lawmakers who have come since,” said Senator Coniglio (D-Bergen), a Senate sponsor. **“Their legacy to this State goes far behind the terms they served, or the laws they shepherded through the process, to the very core of equality for all people, regardless of skin color. It is only fitting that we recognize their remarkable achievements on behalf of African-Americans in New Jersey in the place where they made history – the New Jersey Statehouse.”**

Dr. Walter Gilbert Alexander was also a physician by profession and was elected to the General Assembly in 1921, serving two terms. Assemblyman Alexander served on committees that dealt with health care and sponsored legislation on a range of issues having to do with health care and civil rights. He was the son of former enslaved Americans and the youngest student to enter Lincoln University, which he did at the age of 14. Dr. Alexander, who also served as General Secretary and President of the National Medical Association, died in 1953.

“Senator Inge and Assemblyman Alexander were able to break through the barriers of racial inequality and serve as trailblazers in New Jersey politics,” said Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D-Mercer), an Assembly sponsor. **“We have a responsibility to recognize the historic contributions of African Americans like Hutchins F. Inge and Walter Gilbert Alexander. The legacies of these distinguished New Jerseyans has set an example of excellence in public service that continues to stand for all people to this day.”**

The bill, S2482/A2339 was sponsored in the Senate by Senators Rice (D-Essex) and Tom Kean (R-Essex, Morris, Somerset, Union). It was also sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblypersons Watson Coleman (D-Mercer), Hackett (D-Essex), Manzo (D-Hudson), Conners (D-Burlington, Camden), Carroll (R-Morris) and Sean Kean (R-Monmouth).