



Accredited State Chamber
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U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ONE BLACK AGENDA. ONE STANDARD OF ACCOUNTABILITY.

Following Trenton rally, Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr. IOM calls for unity, measurable progress, and leadership that puts collective interests first.

(TRENTON, NJ – October 15, 2026) – Following today’s Statewide Black Agenda Rally at the New Jersey State House, Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM Founder, President and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), called on elected officials, business leaders, clergy, and community advocates to carry the day’s message beyond the podium and into a sustained demand for results.

The gathering brought together voices from across New Jersey around a shared purpose: a unified Black Agenda advancing equity in healthcare, education, homeownership, government contracting, and economic opportunity.

“Our strength lies in our ability to speak with one voice and remain accountable to the people whose interests brought us together,” said Harmon. “The families and businesses we represent deserve more than recognition during an election cycle. They deserve public policies, investments, and opportunities that improve their lives.”

Harmon recognized Rev. Al Sharpton; Pastor Steffie Bartley of the National Action Network; Newark Mayor Ras Baraka; and the participating civil rights, faith, business, labor, and community organizations for advancing the call for collective action.

He also acknowledged the rally’s announced speakers and participants, including Rev. Dr. Charles Boyer of Salvation and Social Justice; Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson; Mayor Frank Minor; Councilman Kaleem Shabazz; Pastor Pamela Jones; Lawrence Hamm; Ana María Hill; Daryn Martin; Imam Umar B. Salahuddin, Sr.; Commissioners A ‘Dorian Murray-Thomas and Samuel T. Frisby, Sr.; Councilwoman Teska Frisby; Rev. Dr. Frances Snelling Teabout; Derrick Griggs, Jr.; Vivian Cox Fraser; and Crystal Orr; Youth organizations; representing Paterson, Newark and Vineland, NJ.

Reflecting on Rev. Sharpton’s remarks, Harmon emphasized that the Black community’s electoral support must be met with a corresponding commitment to action. New Jersey, he said, has an opportunity to demonstrate what sustained accountability can accomplish and establish an example for communities across the country.

“Our vote is an investment in the future of our families, our businesses, and our communities,” Harmon said. “The return must be visible in the quality of our schools, access to healthcare, opportunities to own a home, and the ability of Black businesses to compete for public contracts and build wealth.”

Harmon renewed his call for action on the disparities documented in state contracting, stressing that identifying inequity creates a responsibility to address it.

“A disparity study cannot become another document that describes our exclusion while the conditions it identifies remain in place,” Harmon said. “We need remedies, implementation deadlines, transparent reporting, and measurable results. Black businesses are taxpayers, employers, and contributors to this economy. Fair access to opportunity is overdue.”

Echoing Mayor Baraka’s call for the whole pie, Harmon urged leaders to maintain the ambition of the collective agenda rather than allow limited concessions to become the measure of success.

“We can acknowledge an achievement and still insist that the larger obligation remains unmet,” Harmon said. “Our responsibility is to measure progress against the needs of our people. Proximity to decision-makers is valuable only when it produces results for those who remain outside the room.”

He emphasized that unity requires a shared commitment to that standard from everyone who speaks on behalf of Black communities.

“No individual appointment, invitation, or relationship can stand in for collective advancement,” Harmon said. “Those entrusted to represent our communities must be willing to ask difficult questions, even when the answers may be uncomfortable for people they know and support. Our agenda must remain larger than any one person’s opportunity.”

Harmon called for direct engagement with the Governor and legislative leadership around defined priorities, public commitments, and regular reporting on implementation. Moreover, Reverend Boyer, made it clear that there are numerous obligations due black people in New Jersey, and the expectation is that they will be paid in full!

“The rally brought us together. What we do next will determine its impact,” Harmon concluded. “One voice must carry one clear expectation: progress our people can see, measure, and experience.”

RALLY PARTICIPANTS:

Elected Officials, Business Advocates, Activists and Faith Leaders, including but not limited to, Rev. Al Sharpton, President of National Action Network (NAN) Newark New Jersey Mayor Ras Baraka; Congresswoman LaMonica McIver; Pastor Steffie Bartley, Northeast Regional Director of National Action Network (NAN); John Harmon, President of The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ); Reverend Dr. Charles Boyer; Logan Township Mayor Frank W. Minor; Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson; Jacob Walthour, Blueprint Capital CEO; Pastor Pamela Jones; Lawrence Hamm, Chairman and among the founders of the People’s Organization for Progress; Ana Maria Hill, New Jersey State Director and Vice President of 32BJ SEIU; Daryn Martin, Secretary-Treasurer · DISTRICT 1199J; Imam Umar B. Salahuddin Sr; Commissioner A’Dorian Murray-Thomas; Commissioner Samuel T. Frisby Sr.; Councilwoman Teska Frisby; Rev. Dr. Frances Snelling Teabout;; Councilman Kaleem Shabazz; Vivian Cox Fraser; New Jersey Urban League; Crystal Orr, President/CEO at Urban League of Union County, Inc; Sharon Foushee; Sherlock Dow, Area 1 Director for New Jersey; Dr. James Dunki; and groups including National Action Network (NAN), National Urban League (NUL), NAACP, People’s Organization for Progress and more.

About The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey

The AACCNJ performs an essential role in the economic viability of New Jersey. While providing a platform for New Jersey's African American business leaders to speak with a collective voice, the AACCNJ advocates and promotes economic diversity fostering a climate of business growth through major initiatives centering on education and public policy. The Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c) 3 tax exemption, which is shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.