

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 27

WHEREAS, New Jersey State Senator Sandra Bolden Cunningham, a trailblazing legislator and dedicated public servant, passed away on October 6, 2026, at the age of 76; and

WHEREAS, born in Newark, New Jersey, Senator Cunningham graduated from West Side High School and Bloomfield College and, before entering public office, worked as an actress with the Negro Ensemble Company, served as Executive Director of the Hudson County Bar Association, and managed community development block grants for Essex County; and

WHEREAS, as the wife of Glenn Dale Cunningham, Jersey City's first Black mayor and a State Senator, she shared a deep commitment to the city and its residents; and

WHEREAS, following Mayor Cunningham's untimely death in 2004, Senator Cunningham carried forward their commitment to public service, while establishing a distinguished legacy of her own; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, Senator Cunningham was elected to the New Jersey State Senate, where she served for more than sixteen years in the seat once held by her husband, representing the 31st Legislative District, which includes Bayonne and portions of Jersey City, until her retirement in 2024; and

WHEREAS, Senator Cunningham earned the admiration and respect of her colleagues and served in several Senate leadership positions, including Majority Whip, Deputy Majority Leader, and Senate President Pro Tempore, as well as Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee and Vice Chair of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee; and

WHEREAS, Senator Cunningham was a fierce advocate for her constituents, and her legacy will endure through her work to uplift communities, confront inequity, and create opportunities for residents too often left behind; and

WHEREAS, Senator Cunningham worked to make higher education more accessible and affordable for low-income students and underrepresented communities and, through the Sandra and Glenn Cunningham Foundation,

helped provide scholarships and mentoring to young people from Jersey City and Bayonne; and

WHEREAS, among her many legislative accomplishments, Senator Cunningham championed the State's "Ban the Box" law, which prohibits employers from asking about an applicant's criminal history during the application process, giving applicants a fair opportunity to be considered for employment based on their abilities and qualifications; and

WHEREAS, Senator Cunningham also advanced reforms to New Jersey's expungement laws including "clean slate" relief, and fought to restore voting rights to people on parole and probation, helping remove barriers to employment and participation in community and civic life for those reentering society; and

WHEREAS, Senator Cunningham sponsored legislation to help individuals leaving prison obtain essential identification and sponsored the "Earn Your Way Out Act" to streamline the State's parole system, and advocated for access to housing, health care, addiction treatment, education, and employment to support individuals' successful return to society; and

WHEREAS, Senator Cunningham fought to make New Jersey's communities safer, including by championing the passage of the State's "one-gun-per-month" law to curb handgun trafficking and protect residents from gun violence; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to honor the life, service, enumerable accomplishments, and enduring legacy of Senator Cunningham, whose courage and devotion to her constituents strengthened New Jersey's communities, and to mark her passing;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI, Acting Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. The flag of the United States of America and the flag of New Jersey shall be flown at half-staff at all State departments, offices, agencies, and instrumentalities during appropriate hours on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, in recognition and mourning of Senator Sandra Bolden Cunningham, a dedicated public servant and tireless advocate for the people of New Jersey.

2. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this
9th day of October,
Two Thousand and Twenty-Six, and
of the Independence of the
United States, the Two Hundred
and Fifty-First.

[seal]

/s/ Nicholas P. Scutari

President of the Senate, Acting Governor

Attest:

/s/ Elizabeth M. Harris

Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor