

## **ILR** Buffalo Co-Lab



### **WORKING ON DEMOCRACY: BUFFALO SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS WITH NYS LEGISLATORS**

#### **CAREERS IN PUBLIC SERVICE INAUGURAL LAUNCH**

Cornell ILR is offering a rare opportunity from June 3 – July 26 with only three fellowship openings. See how change is made up-close on innovative public policies with key legislative leaders and their staff.

#### **ACTIVATE YOUR RIGHT TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY**

Test your interest in public service careers during this historic time in NYS politics. The 2019 summer fellowships in Buffalo, NY are hosted by three outstanding legislators, Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Assembly Member Sean Ryan, and Senator Tim Kennedy.

Fellows will each have a specific project with a specific legislator, participate in workshops on state government, be provided opportunities for community learning and service, and may choose to live in group housing with other Cornell students. Open to Cornell ILR undergraduates.

**Applications due February 15<sup>th</sup>**

<https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/buffalo/buffalo-co-lab/careers-public-service>



## ASSEMBLY MEMBER CRYSTAL PEOPLES-STOKES, DISTRICT 141



Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes has faithfully served New York State's 141st Assembly district since 2003. In January 2019, she was elevated to become the majority leader of the New York State Assembly. An advocate with clear and principled service, she has always put people and policy before politics. She was appointed as Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Governmental Operations in 2015. In June 2017, she was voted by her colleagues to be Chair of the New York State Legislative Women's Caucus which is a bi-partisan and bi-cameral group. Assembly Member Peoples-Stokes continues to fearlessly fight for diversity in our state. She has been an integral part of ensuring that Minority and Women Owned Businesses have a fair chance in obtaining state contracts. As a graduate of both Buffalo Public Schools and Buffalo State College, she earned a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree in Student Personnel Administration.

**District Office:**

425 Michigan Avenue  
Buffalo, NY 14203  
716-897-9714

**Project Supervisor:**

Mark Boyd, Chief of Staff

### From Prohibition to Progress: Responsible and Equitable Drug Policy

*The Issue:* Eight states and the District of Colombia have now legalized marijuana for recreational use and allowed for the growth of a multibillion dollar industry. Tax revenue can be used to build schools and re-build communities. Over the last twenty years, the enforcement of marijuana prohibition has devastated communities across the state of New York. It has been a tool for the hyper-criminalization of young people of color and has been the justification for unconstitutional policing practices. Marijuana legalization in New York must be fair and equitable and address past disproportionate harms to communities of color. Assembly Member Crystal Peoples-Stokes has pushed for the legalization of recreational cannabis since 2013 when she first introduced the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act. That bill – along with a companion bill in the state Senate – would do more than just make it legal to buy, sell and use marijuana. It would also recognize how communities of color have been affected by prohibition.

*The Project:* Through the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act, records would be sealed for people who have previously been convicted of possession and a significant amount of resources will be invested in those communities that have been disenfranchised as a result of mass incarceration. There are many questions surrounding implementation and funding. The summer fellow's research will focus on two large questions:

- Why is it important for legalization to be rooted in racial and economic justice, crafting a diverse and equitable marijuana industry in New York?
- How will revenue from an adult-use marijuana market be allocated across the state; prioritizing impacted communities?

The summer fellow will review how other municipalities have legislated marijuana decriminalization and identify challenges and solutions concerning criminal justice issues. What different stakeholders need to be involved in crafting an equitable and just end to prohibition? Since marijuana is federally illegal, regulations on who can—and can't—work with marijuana largely exclude people who likely have been victims of the war on drugs. The fellow will research market and economic policies to ensure that low-income and people of color are able to access ownership and job opportunities in the retail sector. The fellow will help craft messaging to the community about the proposed legislation (or its implementation if it has progressed). She or he will also write an analysis with policy examples on the need for an equitable legalization prioritizing potential revenues be focused on repairing the harm of criminalization and access to the newly created market for marginalized communities.

*Additional Responsibilities:* With senior staff, represent the Majority Leader at community events, assisting with constituent relations, voter registration, conducting legislative and issue-oriented research on additional topics such as student loan forgiveness and workforce development.

## ASSEMBLY MEMBER SEAN RYAN, DISTRICT 149



Assembly Member Ryan was elected to the NYS Assembly in 2011. He currently chairs the Committee on Libraries and Education Technology. Assembly Member Ryan is a graduate of SUNY College at Fredonia and Brooklyn Law School, and is admitted to practice law in New York State. Assembly Member Ryan's broad legal experience includes work for Neighborhood Legal Services, private law practice collaboration with the Learning Disabilities Association of WNY, concentrating on the rights of disabled students, and the Legal Aide Bureau of Buffalo. In 2008, Assembly Member Ryan began working with People United for Sustainable Housing, Inc. to create a non-profit development entity called the Buffalo Neighborhood Stabilization Company, Inc. (BNSC). He served as the Executive Director and General Counsel of BNSC and worked to create a redevelopment plan for a section of the West Side of Buffalo. Assembly Member Ryan has served on the Board of Directors and provided legal representation and guidance to numerous nonprofit organizations including Buffalo Niagara River Keeper, Housing Opportunities Made Equal, and the Coalition for Economic Justice.

### District Office:

65 Grant Street  
Buffalo, NY 14213  
716-885-9630

### Project Supervisor:

Rebecca Castaneda, Director of Special Projects

## From Citizenship to Voting: Closing the Participation Gap for New Americans

*The Issue:* In 2017, upstate communities took in nearly 95 percent of the some 5,000 refugees New York accepted, according to the state's Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance. Perhaps nowhere has that impact been more profound than in Buffalo, the self-described "City of Good Neighbors," where about 10,000 refugees have been placed over the last decade. In the national discourse, there is great controversy and disagreement about immigration and the role of immigrants in society. Yet most agree that when someone from another country goes through the difficult process of becoming an American citizen, he or she should be entitled to full participation in the nation's democracy. It ensures that elected leadership truly represents the will of the people. Voter turnout among naturalized citizens is much lower overall than that of native-born citizens—consistently around 9 to 12 percentage points less during at least the past four elections.

*The Project:* With the New York State Legislature passing historic voting rights this session, now is the time to narrow the registration and voting gap for new Americans. The fellow will develop and implement a plan for community outreach to the English as a Second Language (ESL) constituencies in the 149th district, including the Burmese and Somali communities. This student would assemble a comprehensive resource that would include, but not be limited to, the names and contact information for community groups, translation resources, businesses owned by members of that group, annual events, cultural institutions, nonprofits/agencies that serve the constituencies, etc. Information will be gathered via the Internet, phone calls, and in-person interviews with community members. This report would include a memo on the demographics and background information on the constituencies and the final project would for the student to put together, with the help of staff, an event or meeting to engage these constituencies with the broader work of the Assemblyman in the 149th district. Voter registration of these constituencies is of particular interest. The fellow will write a memo on policies to increase registration and turnout including such ideas as providing voter registration services at naturalization ceremonies.

*Additional Responsibilities:* With senior staff, representing the Assembly Member at community events, assisting with constituent relations, voter registration, conducting legislative and issue-oriented research on additional topics such as workforce development and worker-owned business models.

## SENATOR TIM KENNEDY, 63<sup>RD</sup> SENATE DISTRICT



Senator Kennedy was sworn into office in January 2011 and currently chairs the Transportation Committee. The Senator knows the importance of growing and protecting Western New York's workforce. He has worked to secure funding to support workforce training programs to the long-term unemployed, opening them up to rewarding good-paying careers. He voted to fund the Buffalo Billion, which is creating thousands of jobs in Western New York, giving the local economy the boost needed to break away from decades of decline. He also regularly works one-on-one with local companies to link them with state resources that allow them to grow their workforce. A lifelong Buffalonian, Senator Kennedy received his bachelor's and master's degrees in occupational therapy at D'Youville College. Recognizing that any challenge is an opportunity for a community to grow stronger, he was inspired to get involved in government to help move the community forward.

### District Office:

2239 South Park Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14220  
716-826-2683

### Project Supervisor:

Richard Rogers, Legislative Director

### From Ridership to Representation: Reliable and Equitable Public Transportation

*The Issue:* Mobility is opportunity. Public transit must reach into communities of color and low-income communities in order to make sure all residents have accessibility get to good jobs and affordable housing. Funding cuts for public transit, specifically to the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, too often pass the expense onto its riders through rate hikes and route cuts. It is critical that rider voices are heard and incorporated into policy decision-making.

*The Project:* Additional work products to be determined and posted soon. Cornell ILR Buffalo Co-Lab staff has taken leadership from Erie County to Ithaca to highlight local policy around climate change and sustainability. To expand this dialogue on best practices in upstate public policy the fellow will help coordinate a forum on public transit here in Buffalo amongst Erie County and Tompkins County. Working with Cornell Community Relations and ILR Buffalo Co-Lab, the fellow would coordinate with University stakeholders and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit for this discussion of their cooperative model and formal fare funding.

*Additional Responsibilities:* With senior staff, represent the Senator at community events, assist with constituent relations, conduct legislative and issue-oriented research on additional topics such as campaign finance reform.