

Jay Stephens' SBA Presidential Platform

➤ **Expanding the Rutgers Law name within the New York City Metro Area.**

- Rutgers Law Newark has a rich history and a reputation as the premiere law school for the state of New Jersey. Many Rutgers alumni have gone on to practice within the public and private interest areas throughout the state.
- However, with the law school's close proximity to New York City, many students aspire to have the opportunity to practice there. With a large number of students taking the New York Bar Exam in addition to the New Jersey State Bar, it is essential for students to create and nurture relationships with not only practicing attorneys who are employed in the city, but with other law schools as well.
- It is no secret that networking is an important aspect of finding employment in today's oversaturated legal market. We need more than visibility by these firms and public interest organizations, we need a presence within them.
- We need to collaborate with other law schools specifically within New York City, formulating networking events with each other, as well as encouraging students at our law school to become more active in the numerous legal organizations New York City has to offer.
- Rutgers Law - Newark has and continues to produce talented, ambitious lawyers who are capable of competing at the same level as individuals from New York schools.

➤ **Creating community service days and brainstorming other philanthropic initiatives throughout the Newark community.**

- Rutgers law has been part of the city of Newark's history for decades. Lawyers have been trained in the law school and have moved on to become a dominant force within the Newark legal community.
- With our law school being in the heart of Newark's city limits, it is important for students to give back to the community, maintaining the law school's label as "the people's electric law school."
- The city of Newark is going through a transitional phase of gentrification, and rejuvenating many areas of downtown that have been subject to decades of crime and abandonment. It is important for Rutgers Law to be in the center of this. The evolution of a new Newark is not only affecting the city of Newark proper, but also the law school.
- Relationships between the law school, current mayor city administration, and other public officials within the state and federal governments need to be established in

order to produce the best results. Using the knowledge and skills learned while in law school to benefit our community will strengthen Rutgers Law's dedication to public interest.

➤ **Overcoming fear and taking a stand against injustice based on race, gender, sexuality, and religion.**

- Throughout our law school's history, it has been clear that the pioneers who worked so hard to make Rutgers Law - Newark what it has become today, were also passionate in pursuing equality and justice for all.
- The incidents of injustice that have occurred throughout this past year have made it clear that, in spite of the fact that our country has moved forward from its past, there is still much work to be done.
- Change and awareness begins with courage. It begins with fearlessness, not being afraid to stand for our ideals, even when those ideals may be challenged and questioned by the majority.
- While there may never be a consensus on which issues are the most important or deserve the most attention, or how it is we should go about attempting to solve them, facing these issues directly is where we can find common ground. Our goal should be to acknowledge that these issues do exist, and to foster healthy discussion and debate, using this discourse as fuel to help find positive, lasting solutions.
- We are law students. We may not have all the answers, but we will one day be in the position to change and affect the laws that govern the people. True change begins with a belief in justice, equality, fairness, and opportunity, and those beliefs should be encouraged and refined here, to be carried with us into our future careers, to help better shape the world.

➤ **Taking things a step further than "expressing" our concerns to the administration regarding shortcomings which concerning our grades, classes, and well-being.**

- An effort has been made to express to both the administration and the faculty our disapproval of certain policies and procedures, specifically those regarding grades.
- Grades are perhaps the most important "receipt" that we have to show for our success during our tenure in law school. It is unacceptable when our career opportunities are jeopardized because of the lack of "timeliness" on the part of our administration and faculty.
- Dedicating three years of our lives socially and financially to work toward a career within the legal profession is an investment. It requires an enormous

amount of sacrifice, particularly of our time; an investment which cannot be given back to us. We cannot recoup.

- With the hours of reading, outlining, and stressing that comes with adequately preparing for our exams, the student body deserves a system which will process and release our grades in a timely matter. We should not have to worry that we are missing out on opportunities, while our contemporaries from other law schools are getting ahead. Instead, we are left feeling slighted, empty handed as a result of decisions out of our control.
- Because our careers are on the line and prospects are being negatively impacted by the current system, it is essential that we take the appropriate steps to bring forth actual change. With the support of the students, a possible next step would be to contact the American Bar Association (ABA) regarding the matter.

➤ **Revamping sectors of the Student Bar Association (SBA) to further improve its effectiveness.**

- The responsibility of the SBA goes beyond voting and passing bills. It's the duty of the President, as well as elected representatives from each class, to go above and beyond, to ensure that new ideas and issues are consistently being brought to the fore, while being mindful of our goal to progress and improve the law school environment for the student body.
- Once these ideas have been formulated, debated, and fine-tuned during the bi-weekly general body meeting, it is essential to communicate this information directly to the student body.
- The current format of e-mailing the "SBA Minutes Review" is not achieving its intended purpose. Information needs to be relayed, expediently, to the student body with a streamlined approach that highlights important developments that will impact everyone.
- This is why I am proposing to have a monthly "State of RU Law" address by the then current President. During this address to be filmed like any formal presidential address would, needs to inform the student body in a way that is thorough and transparent.
- **The SBA reps should also give updates to their respective classes regarding things that the President is working on/doing.** This is only right as the student body elected these individuals into office, so they should at least have a right to know how things are being conducted. These updates would include bills that have been passed and are being considered.

- The SBA Class Representatives should also give updates to their respective classes about the SBA's current goals and projects.

Another possible solution would be to film each SBA General Body meeting, and release the minutes from a "typical" Executive Board meeting

➤ **As the law school continues in the process of merging with Rutgers Law - Camden, the Presidents and Representatives of both the Newark and Camden SBA's need to work together and find creative solutions in helping to establish and solidify the Rutgers Law School brand.**

- When discussing visions for a law school, we need to think of orchestrating ways to improve the marketability of our law school. With the legal market in general being as competitive as ever, ideas need to be formulated to improve the image of Rutgers Law School both regionally and nationally.
- The reality is that for many schools that are not "top tier" law schools, or who are not physically engulfed within the city limits of a "hot market," it is almost always an uphill climb to become noticed by sought after large, prestigious firms. Even students within the top of their class find it difficult to even get in the door for an interview.
- This is why it is important to use the resources and talent within our law school to market our law school in a unique and non-traditional way.
- This could include continuing to build the Rutgers Law Forum into something that would become a model for other law schools to adopt; encouraging SBA representatives and members of the general student body to attend events in both New Jersey and New York to increase our network, to encourage our students who live in different regions of the country to find new ways to increase our presence throughout the national community, which would include reaching out to alumni from different areas, and holding panel discussions for the general public on areas of particular interest.

Please note that this is only a brief overview of my platform created for the betterment of our law school, and details could change at any time