

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 51

BY REPRESENTATIVES BRASS, BACALA, BAGNERIS, BERTHELOT, BILLIOT, BOUIE, CHAD BROWN, CARMODY, CARPENTER, GARY CARTER, ROBBY CARTER, STEVE CARTER, COX, DAVIS, DUPLESSIS, FOIL, FRANKLIN, GAINES, GISCLAIR, GLOVER, GUINN, HALL, HUNTER, HUVAL, JAMES, JEFFERSON, JENKINS, JOHNSON, JORDAN, TERRY LANDRY, LYONS, MARCELLE, GREGORY MILLER, NORTON, PIERRE, RICHARD, SCHEXNAYDER, SMITH, STOKES, THIBAUT, WHITE, AND WRIGHT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To create and establish the Slavery Ancestral Burial Grounds Preservation Commission to study and develop measures to preserve and protect unmarked and historic burial grounds, graves, and cemeteries of the formerly enslaved in Louisiana.

WHEREAS, preservation of the burial grounds and cemeteries of slaves is significant because they represent not only an important part of the cultural heritage of Louisiana, but America; and

WHEREAS, although most burial grounds and cemeteries of the formerly enslaved contain unmarked graves, the research uncovered from these burial places reveals information about how the people lived, their connections to each other and the surrounding community of plantations, and most of all, their connections to the descendants living now; and

WHEREAS, most records regarding burial grounds and cemeteries of the formerly enslaved are limited to plantation inventories and incomplete census records; nevertheless, these are sacred grounds that should be regarded as such; and

WHEREAS, the discovery of these grounds and cemeteries is instrumental in helping families trace their family roots; moreover, it is important that these sacred spaces are preserved and protected to ensure that the knowledge about the legacy of the enslaved and free people who worked on the plantations is preserved for future generations; and

WHEREAS, the state of Louisiana acknowledges the humanity of all the people buried in long-lost graves along the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, the state of Louisiana also acknowledges their contributions to the economy and culture of this great state and this nation; and

WHEREAS, by acknowledging and protecting these sites, we are presenting a meaningful way to better understand the reality of slavery, which will hopefully give us a better understanding of the heritage and history of our friends, colleagues, and neighbors.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create the Slavery Ancestral Burial Grounds Preservation Commission to study and develop measures to preserve and protect unmarked and historic burial grounds, graves, and cemeteries of the formerly enslaved in Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall be comprised of representatives assigned from relevant and interested state agencies and other relevant and interested parties, including but not limited to all of the following:

- (1) Two members from the office of cultural development within the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, in the office of the lieutenant governor: the state archaeologist and the director of the division of historic preservation.
- (2) One member of the Louisiana House of Representatives appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (3) One member of the Louisiana Senate appointed by the president of the Senate.
- (4) The chair of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus or his designee.
- (5) The executive director of the Louisiana Sheriff's Association or his designee.
- (6) The chair of the Louisiana Cemetery Board or his designee.
- (7) The executive director of Save Our Cemeteries or his designee.
- (8) The president of the Le Comité des Archives de la Louisiane, Inc. or his designee.
- (9) The president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or his designee.
- (10) The chair of the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce or his designee.

- (11) One representative of the office of research and strategic initiatives of the Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College.
- (12) One representative of the office of research and strategic initiatives of the Nicholls State University.
- (13) The United States Representative for Louisiana's 2nd congressional district or his designee.
- (14) The attorney general or his designee who is an attorney.
- (15) The State Superintendent of Education or his designee.
- (16) The governor or his designee.
- (17) One representative of the River Road African American Museum.
- (18) Two representatives of the American Sugar Cane League.
- (19) One representative of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry.
- (20) One representative of the Louisiana Chemical Association.
- (21) One representative of Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association designated by the president of the association.
- (22) One representative of the Ascension Parish Tourism Commission.
- (23) One representative of the Iberville Tourist Commission.
- (24) Three representatives of the River Parishes Tourist Commission representing St. Charles Parish, St. James Parish, and St. John the Baptist Parish, respectively.
- (25) One owner of a plantation in the river parishes appointed from a list of three nominees submitted by the River Parishes Tourist Commission.
- (26) Three representatives of the general public who have demonstrated a commitment to the preservation and protection of historic cemeteries appointed from a list of five nominees submitted by Save Our Cemeteries.
- (27) The president of the National Urban League or his designee.
- (28) One representative of the Louisiana Municipal Association.
- (29) One representative of the Louisiana Police Jury Association.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission is assigned to the office of the lieutenant governor with staff support to be provided from existing personnel within the office.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, at the first meeting of the commission, the members may elect a chairman, vice chairman, and other officers as they may deem appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall be domiciled in Baton Rouge but may hold public meetings elsewhere in the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall meet as necessary and shall serve without compensation and at no expense to the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that member vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the purpose of the commission shall be to create a written report of existing local, state, and federal cemetery protection laws to determine rules and regulations for the identification, protection, and preservation of such grounds and cemeteries and to make suggestions for additional laws to protect these sacred sites to the House Committee on Commerce and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and International Affairs on or before the end of the sixth month following the commission's first meeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall submit a second written report to the House Committee on Commerce and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and International Affairs on or before the end of one year following the release of the first report. This second report shall consist of the commission's findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation if necessary and reasons therefore, on each of the following:

- (1) A cost-effective mechanism for cataloging unmarked and historic burial grounds, graves, and cemeteries of slaves in Louisiana.
- (2) Measures designed to protect the location of these sites from desecration.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission shall submit a third written report to the House Committee on Commerce and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and International Affairs on or before the end of one year following the release of the second report. This third report shall consist of the commission's findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation if necessary and reasons therefore, on each of the following:

- (1) Funding sources for the preservation and protection of these sites in conjunction with the River Road African American Museum.
- (2) Methods for incorporating findings into educational history for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.
- (3) Strategies for incorporating historical sites as tourist attractions in this state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the commission may form any number and configuration of committees to accomplish the goals set forth herein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the appointing entities named in this Resolution.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE