

Senate Bill 27

By: Senators Bulloch of the 11th, Heath of the 31st, Hill of the 4th, Pearson of the 51st, Powell of the 23rd and others

AS PASSED

AN ACT

To amend Chapter 4 of Title 1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to holidays and observances, so as to create Confederate Heritage and History Month; to provide for legislative findings; to encourage observances and celebrations of Confederate Heritage and History Month; to provide for statutory construction; to amend Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50, relating to other state symbols, so as to provide that the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum shall be an official state historical civil rights museum; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

WHEREAS, Savannah has a long and storied role in the civil rights movement, beginning with a meeting between General Sherman and Secretary of War Stanton and twelve Black leaders on January 12, 1865, to discuss the matter of emancipation; and

WHEREAS, the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, recently named "Georgia's Best New History Museum" by the Georgia Journal, is named in honor of the late Dr. Ralph Mark Gilbert. The father of Savannah's modern day Civil Rights Movement and fearless National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leader was known for much more than his outspoken campaigns for civil rights. He was a nationally known orator, pulpiteer, and playwright, producing religious dramas, known as passion plays, throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Gilbert served as pastor of historic First African Baptist Church on Franklin Square in Savannah for 16 years. In 1942, he reorganized the Savannah Branch NAACP, served as president for eight years and convened the first state conference. Branches from Savannah, Brunswick, Dublin, Atlanta, Columbus, Macon, Albany and three other branches whose identities are uncertain, attended and elected Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert president.

Under his courageous leadership, more than forty NAACP branches were organized in Georgia by 1950; and

WHEREAS, Georgia's best new history museum chronicles the civil rights struggle of Georgia's oldest African American community from slavery to the present. Three floors of handsome photographic and interactive exhibits, includes an NAACP Organization exhibit, a fiber optic map of 87 significant civil rights sites/events, a lunch counter where "sit ins" occurred, segregation exhibits, and video presentation are all part of the continuous education of the public on the history of the civil rights struggle in Savannah and Georgia. The museum is located in historic Savannah in a five level building that was erected in 1914 as the Wage Earners Savings and Loan Bank for Black Savannahians, the largest Black bank in the country at that time.

SECTION 2.

Chapter 4 of Title 1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to holidays and observances, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"1-4-20.

(a) The General Assembly hereby finds and determines that tourism is a great economic resource in Georgia; and historical, heritage, and cultural inheritance are among the tourism industry's most popular attractions. Georgia's Confederate heritage, physical artifacts and battle sites, and historic events and persons not only attract visitors, they are potentially of even greater importance and benefit to our state's economy. Increased development of our state's Confederate history and heritage as part of the tourism industry will be enhanced through recognizing, celebrating, and advertising that heritage and history.

(b) The month of April of each year is hereby designated as Confederate History and Heritage Month and shall be set aside to honor, observe, and celebrate the Confederate States of America, its history, those who served in its armed forces and government, and all those millions of its citizens of various races and ethnic groups and religions who contributed in sundry and myriad ways to the cause which they held so dear from its founding on February 4, 1861, in Montgomery, Alabama, until the Confederate ship CSS *Shenandoah* sailed into Liverpool Harbor and surrendered to British authorities on November 6, 1865.

(c) Officials and departments of state, county, and municipal governments, boards of education, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, businesses, and all citizens are encouraged to participate in programs, displays, and activities that

commemorate and honor our shared history and cultural inheritance throughout each April during Confederate History and Heritage Month.”

SECTION 3.

Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50, relating to other state symbols, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

“50-3-85.

The Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum is designated an official Georgia historical civil rights museum.”

SECTION 4.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.