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**HOUSE BILL NO. 1200**

Offered January 13, 2010

Prefiled January 13, 2010

*A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 30 a chapter numbered 49, consisting of sections numbered 30-319 through 30-324, relating to the Virginia Slave Commission; report.*

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 Patron—McQuinn

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 Referred to Committee on Rules

Whereas, on August 20, 1619, enslaved Africans were first brought to the New World, landing on the shores of the Commonwealth; and

Whereas, over four million Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States and its colonies from 1619 to 1865, slavery flourished in America for 400 years, and the trafficking in human beings was a lucrative enterprise; and

Whereas, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the United States until 1865, and constituted an immoral and inhumane deprivation of life, liberty, happiness, citizenship, and the right to the fruit of one's own labor, and the annihilation of African heritage and culture; and

Whereas, it is vital to educate citizens concerning the human carnage and dehumanizing atrocities committed during slavery and its legacy in America in order to understand modern social, economic, and political problems whose roots lie in slavery and in order that history may not be repeated; and

Whereas, sufficient scholarly inquiry has not been made into the effects and legacy of the institution of slavery on the descendants of enslaved Africans and contemporary society in the United States; now, therefore,

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 30 a chapter numbered 49, consisting of sections numbered 30-319 through 30-324, as follows:**

**CHAPTER 49.****VIRGINIA SLAVE COMMISSION.**

*§ 30-319. The Virginia Slave Commission; purpose.*

*The Virginia Slave Commission is established in the legislative branch of state government for the purpose of addressing political, economic, educational, and societal issues whose roots lie in the transatlantic slave trade, by studying its current effects on African Americans, researching the vestiges of slavery in the Commonwealth, exploring the contributions of African Americans in building Virginia and the nation, and recommending options to resolve lingering societal problems whose roots lie in slavery.*

*§ 30-320. Membership; terms; quorum; meetings.*

*The Virginia Slave Commission shall have a total membership of 12 members who shall consist of eight legislative members, two nonlegislative citizen members, and two ex officio members. Members shall be appointed as follows: five members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; three members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; two nonlegislative citizen members, one of whom shall be the director of the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia or his designee, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates, and one of whom shall be a recognized historian with scholarship in American history and slavery, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his designee and the Director of the Department of Historic Resources or his designee shall serve ex officio with voting privileges. Nonlegislative citizen members of the Commission shall be citizens of the Commonwealth.*

*Legislative members and ex officio members of the Commission shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office.*

*Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments. All members may be reappointed.*

*No House member shall serve more than four consecutive two-year terms, no Senate member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms, and no nonlegislative citizen member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates or the Senate Committee on Rules shall serve more than four consecutive two-year terms. The remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a*

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59 vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment.

60 The Commission shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership who shall be  
61 members of the General Assembly. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. The  
62 Commission shall meet no more than four times each year. The meetings of the Commission shall be  
63 held at the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request.

64 § 30-221. Virginia Slave Commission Fund established.

65 There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Virginia  
66 Slave Commission Fund, hereafter referred to as the "Fund." The Fund shall be established on the  
67 books of the Comptroller and shall consist of gifts, grants, donations, bequests, or other funds from any  
68 source as may be received by the Commission for its work. Moneys shall be paid into the state treasury  
69 and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be  
70 credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal  
71 year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be  
72 used for the purpose of enabling the Commission to perform its duties. Expenditures and disbursements  
73 from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written  
74 request of the chairman of the Commission.

75 § 30-322. Compensation; expenses.

76 Legislative members of the Commission shall receive such compensation as provided in § 30-19.12,  
77 and nonlegislative citizen members shall receive such compensation for the performance of their duties  
78 as provided in § 2.2-2813. All members shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses  
79 incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825. Funding for the  
80 costs of compensation and expenses of the members shall be provided by the Commission from such  
81 funds as it may receive.

82 § 30-323. Powers and duties of the Commission.

83 The Virginia Slave Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

84 1. Survey and catalog the extent and breadth of education concerning the African slave trade,  
85 slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in the country, and the contributions of African Americans to  
86 American society and the world;

87 2. Determine the extent to which information regarding slavery is incorporated into the curricula and  
88 textbooks and taught in the public school systems of the state;

89 3. Seek, receive, and expend gifts, grants, donations, bequests, or other funds from any source to  
90 support the work of the Commission, implement the Commission's plans, and facilitate the objectives of  
91 this chapter;

92 4. Inventory relevant African American history memorials, exhibits, and resources in the  
93 Commonwealth and assess the potential economic impact of tourism and economic development  
94 associated with visits to such sites;

95 5. Develop a roster of historians, educators, businesses, organizations, and volunteers who may be  
96 requested to volunteer to act as resource persons for classroom teachers on the African slave trade,  
97 American slavery, the impact of slavery on modern society, and the contributions of African Americans  
98 to the Commonwealth and the nation;

99 6. Evaluate the extent to which the history of the African slave trade, slavery in America, the depth  
100 of the impact of slavery on American society, and the triumphs and significant contributions of African  
101 Americans to the development of the Commonwealth and the nation are integrated into the Standards of  
102 Learning and statewide student assessments;

103 7. Provide appropriate memorialization of the events concerning the enslavement of Africans and  
104 their descendants in America, as well as their struggle for freedom and liberty through such venues as  
105 workshops, conferences, institutes, seminars, internships, professional teacher development, and other  
106 programs and activities;

107 8. Promote the identification and conservation of historic sites significant to the presence and  
108 contributions of enslaved Africans in Virginia;

109 9. Appoint and establish an Advisory Council composed of nonlegislative citizens at large who have  
110 a knowledge of African history and civilization; Virginia history; the African-American Diaspora;  
111 American history and the institution of slavery; Reconstruction; historical education and literacy;  
112 economic development; historic preservation and archaeology; and an interest in ensuring the  
113 perpetuation of the African American ethos and society, and the preservation of historical and  
114 archeological sites and facilities significant to African American history and culture in the  
115 Commonwealth. Members of the Advisory Council shall serve without compensation or reimbursement  
116 for expenses as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825;

117 10. Seek the assistance and collaboration of diverse organizations and interested parties, in Virginia  
118 and out of state, with expertise or experience in order to facilitate the Commission's work;

119 11. Submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual report for publication as a report  
120 document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the

processing of legislative documents and reports. The chairman shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Commission no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall be submitted for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website; and

12. Perform such other duties, functions, and activities as the Commission deems necessary to facilitate and implement the objectives of this chapter.

§ 30-324. Staffing.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support to the Commission. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

**2. For its first year of existence, if the Commission is not funded by a separate appropriation in the Appropriation Act, the Commission may be funded from the operating budgets of the Clerk of the House of Delegates and the Clerk of the Senate upon the approval of the Joint Rules Committee. If the Commission is not funded by a separate appropriation in the Appropriation Act for any year thereafter, this chapter shall expire on July 1 of the fiscal year that the Commission fails to receive such funding.**