

Senate Resolution 424

By: Senators Merritt of the 9th, Esteves of the 6th, Jackson of the 41st, McLaurin of the 14th, Islam of the 7th and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging Governor Brian Kemp, Chancellor Sonny Perdue, and the Georgia General Assembly
2 to swiftly create a long overdue state agency known as the Georgia Commission on Slavery,
3 similar to the nearly 40-year-old Georgia Commission on the Holocaust; and other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, more than four million Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the
5 United States and the colonies that became the United States from 1619 to 1865, inclusive;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, the institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the
8 United States from 1789 through 1865, inclusive; and

9 WHEREAS, the slavery that flourished in Georgia and the United States constituted an
10 immoral and inhumane deprivation of Africans' life, liberty, citizenship rights, and religious
11 and cultural heritage as well as a denial of the fruits of their own labor; and

12 WHEREAS, following the abolition of slavery on Juneteenth 1865, the United States
13 government at the federal, state, and local levels continued to perpetuate, condone, and often
14 profit from practices that continued to brutalize and disadvantage African Americans,

15 including sharecropping, convict leasing, Jim Crow laws, redlining, unequal education, and
16 disproportionate treatment at the hands of the criminal justice system; and

17 WHEREAS, as a result of the historic and continued discrimination, African Americans
18 continue to suffer debilitating economic, educational, environmental, and health hardships,
19 including, but not limited to, having nearly one million Black people incarcerated; and

20 WHEREAS, in Georgia, the vestiges of slavery are ever before Black people from the overt
21 racism of hate groups to the subtle racism across all areas of Black life, including recent
22 complaints documented by human rights organizations such as the Cameroon American
23 Council, which revealed anti-Black and anti-African discriminatory treatment by United
24 States government agents against Cameroonians while in immigration detention; and

25 WHEREAS, these Cameroonian migrant women experienced severe medical negligence and
26 abuse, including a non-consensual gynecological procedure, at Georgia's Irwin County
27 Detention Center; and

28 WHEREAS, European and African nations have apologized for their roles in what history
29 calls the worst Holocaust of humankind—the Atlantic Slave Trade—and racial reconciliation
30 is impossible without some acknowledgment of the moral and legal injustices perpetrated
31 upon African Americans; and

32 WHEREAS, the story of the enslavement of Africans and their descendants, the human
33 carnage, and the dehumanizing atrocities committed during slavery should not be purged
34 from Georgia's history or discounted; and

35 WHEREAS, all people should remember the horrible atrocities of slavery committed at that
36 time and during other times in human history as the result of bigotry and tyranny and should
37 continually rededicate themselves to the principles of human rights and equal protection
38 under the laws of a democratic society; and

39 WHEREAS, it is desirable to educate our citizens about the events leading up to slavery and
40 about the organizations and facilities that were created and used purposefully for the
41 systematic destruction of human beings; and

42 WHEREAS, slavery history is the proper concern of all people, particularly students enrolled
43 in the schools, colleges, and universities of the State of Georgia; and

44 WHEREAS, programs, workshops, institutes, seminars, exhibits, and other teacher-training
45 activities for the study of the slavery have taken place during recent years at various middle
46 schools, high schools, colleges, and universities in this state; and

47 WHEREAS, it is desirable to create a permanent state commission that as an organized body
48 and on a continuous basis will survey, design, encourage, and promote implementation of
49 slavery education and awareness programs in Georgia and will be responsible for organizing
50 and promoting the memorialization of the slavery on a regular basis throughout the state; and

51 WHEREAS, the history of the Holocaust in Europe is preserved within the Georgia state
52 funded agency with a budget of \$330,000 annually known as the Georgia Commission on
53 the Holocaust, which is a non-partisan state agency administratively attached to the Board
54 of Regents with Chancellor Sonny Perdue that was established in 1986 by executive order
55 to educate the citizens of and visitors to Georgia about the consequences of hate, prejudice,
56 and discrimination by teaching the lessons of the Holocaust; and

57 WHEREAS, both the Third Reich of the Nazi Government and the Afrikaaner government
58 of apartheid South Africa based their oppressive regimes on America's inhumane anti-Black
59 laws regarding slavery, segregation and Jim Crow; and

60 WHEREAS, a proposed Georgia Commission on Slavery following the template of the
61 nearly 40-year-old Georgia Commission on the Holocaust will be a partial fulfillment of the
62 dream of our great Georgian Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose words urged us to hew out
63 of the mountain of despair (slavery) a stone of hope (the Georgia Commission on Slavery)
64 and who within his "I Have a Dream" speech implored us to "let freedom ring from Stone
65 Mountain of Georgia"; and

66 WHEREAS, it is abundantly fitting, long overdue, and proper that the history of slavery in
67 Georgia be met with executive action.

68 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
69 urge Governor Brian Kemp, Chancellor Sonny Perdue, and the Georgia General Assembly
70 to take swift action to create a Georgia Commission on Slavery similar to the nearly
71 40-year-old Georgia Commission on the Holocaust.

72 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
73 to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the public and the
74 press.