
By: **Delegate Burns**

Introduced and read first time: February 9, 2006

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Apology for Slavery**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Governor of Maryland to apologize on behalf of the
4 citizens of Maryland for the State's history of slavery, its long-held silence in the
5 face of slavery, and the atrocities committed under slavery in the State;
6 requiring the Governor to issue the apology on the 144th anniversary of the
7 issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln; and generally
8 relating to an apology for slavery in Maryland.

9 **Preamble**

10 WHEREAS, There were slaves in Maryland from the time that the colony was
11 founded, and historians recognize that the earliest slave was brought to Maryland in
12 the 1630s; and

13 WHEREAS, A 1663 law stated that unless a black man could prove that he had
14 contracted his labor, he was presumed to be a slave in perpetuity; and

15 WHEREAS, Slaveholding grew by significant proportions in the 1690s, so that
16 while slaves made up only 3% of the population of the colony in 1658, their numbers
17 grew to 15 to 25% of the populations of the various counties in 1710; and

18 WHEREAS, The growth of the tobacco trade in Maryland, and Maryland's
19 resulting wealth, was heavily dependent on the importation and use of slaves; and

20 WHEREAS, Historians recognize that, among the American colonies, only
21 Virginia imported more slaves than Maryland; and

22 WHEREAS, As in other states, slaves in Maryland were whipped and grossly
23 mistreated, with large numbers of slaves forced to suffer from terrible respiratory and
24 other ailments for which they were offered little treatment; and

25 WHEREAS, Husbands and wives were torn apart and their children were
26 ripped from their families, as all were sold within the chains of slavery; and

27 WHEREAS, In the 1820s slaveholding continued to flourish in Maryland,
28 despite the efforts of abolitionists who held antislavery meetings in Baltimore and

1 Hagerstown, presented an antislavery petition to the General Assembly, and
2 convinced one Baltimore newspaper to refuse the advertisements of slave dealers; and

3 WHEREAS, Although slaveholding in Maryland began a gradual decline after
4 1810, with the slave population dropping from 111,500 in 1810 to 102,400 in 1830,
5 Marylanders still owned 87,189 slaves in 1860; and

6 WHEREAS, From 1830 on, despite this drop in the overall number of slaves,
7 Maryland remained the northernmost slaveholding state; and

8 WHEREAS, The General Assembly responded to the increasing numbers of
9 freed blacks in the 1830s by restricting the activities of blacks and establishing a
10 State board to oversee "the Removal of Coloured People", the repatriation of freed
11 blacks to Africa; and

12 WHEREAS, Militant slaveholders lobbied the General Assembly in 1860 to
13 strengthen slavery, end manumission, and forbid blacks from peddling, traveling,
14 holding their own church services, or having their own schools; and

15 WHEREAS, Baltimoreans rioted on April 19, 1861, in opposition to the
16 movement of Union troops, from Philadelphia to Washington, through the town; now,
17 therefore,

18 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
19 MARYLAND, That:

20 (1) The Governor of Maryland shall apologize on behalf of the citizens of
21 Maryland for the State's history of slavery, its long-held silence in the face of slavery,
22 and the atrocities committed under slavery in the State; and

23 (2) The Governor shall issue the apology on September 22, 2006, the
24 144th anniversary of the issuance by President Abraham Lincoln of the Emancipation
25 Proclamation.

26 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take
27 effect July 1, 2006.