

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1049 (Delegate Burns)
Rules and Executive Nominations

Apology for Slavery

This bill requires the Governor to apologize on behalf of the citizens of Maryland for the State's history of slavery. The apology must be made on September 22, 2006, the 144th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Issuing an apology for the past practice of slavery would not affect State operations.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Slavery in Maryland was abolished on November 1, 1864 with the ratification of the 1864 Maryland Constitution. Article 2 of the State Constitution incorporates the U.S. Constitution and all laws made pursuant to it, as the supreme law of Maryland. In 1865, the 13th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, which abolished slavery in every state.

Background: Slavery existed in Maryland almost at the time of its inception as an English colony in 1634. In 1664, slavery was officially sanctioned by law with

enslavement lasting for the entire life of an individual. In 1698, the monopoly of the slave trade by the Royal African Company was abolished by the English Parliament resulting in a sizeable increase in the number of slaves being imported to the colonies. In 1864, slavery was abolished in Maryland with the ratification of a new State constitution.

In 1820, there were approximately 107,400 slaves and 39,700 free blacks living in Maryland. As a share of the State's population, slaves accounted for 26.4% and free blacks accounted for 9.7%. By 1860, the number of slaves living in Maryland declined to 87,200 while the number of free blacks increased to 83,900. As a share of the State's population, slaves accounted for 12.7% and free blacks accounted for 12.2%.

Chapter 316 of 2000 created the Commission to Coordinate the Study, Commemoration, and Impact of Slavery's History and Legacy in Maryland. The commission is charged with identifying and participating in the preservation of cultural and historical sites relating to the legacy of slavery in Maryland, as well as, maintaining library and archival resources about the history and legacy of slavery. In addition, the commission must keep the State informed of current research on the lingering effects of slavery and its legacy, including the impact on crime and crime control. The Maryland Historical Trust and the State Archives provide staffing for the commission.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar bills were introduced in prior years as HB 1073 of 2005, HB 898 of 2004, HJ 10 of 2003, and HJ 12 of 2000. No action was taken by the House of Delegates on HB 1073 and HJ 10. HB 898 was withdrawn and HJ 12 received an unfavorable report by the House Commerce and Government Matters Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Archives, Governor's Office, Department of Legislative Services

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