

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Revised

House Joint Resolution 4 (Delegate Vaughn, *et al.*)

Rules and Executive Nominations

Judicial Proceedings

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Slavery in Maryland

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This joint resolution expresses profound regret for the role that Maryland played in instituting and maintaining slavery and for the discrimination that was slavery's legacy; commits the State to the formation of a more perfect union among its citizens regardless of color, creed, or race; and recommits the State to the principle that all people "are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Compliance with this joint resolution would not directly affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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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 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### *Legislative Action in Virginia*

In February 2007, the Virginia General Assembly approved resolutions that acknowledge with profound regret the involuntary servitude of Africans and the exploitation of Native Americans, and calls for reconciliation among all Virginians. The resolutions also call upon the people of the commonwealth to express acknowledgment and thanksgiving for the contributions of Native Americans and African Americans to the commonwealth and this nation, and to the propagation of the ideals of liberty, justice, and democracy.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** SJ 4 of 2006, a similar resolution as amended, was approved by the Senate and assigned to the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. HB 1049 of 2006, which required the Governor to apologize on behalf of the citizens of Maryland for the State's history of slavery, was assigned to Rules and Executive Nominations. The House took no further action on either legislation.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Virginia General Assembly, Maryland State Archives, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 8, 2007  
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