

1 AN ACT establishing the Amistad Commission.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency Act is
5 amended by adding Section 22 as follows:

6 (20 ILCS 3405/22 new)

7 Sec. 22. Amistad Commission.

8 (a) Purpose. The General Assembly finds and declares that
9 all people should know of and remember the human carnage and
10 dehumanizing atrocities committed during the period of the
11 African slave trade and slavery in America and of the vestiges
12 of slavery in this country; and it is in fact vital to educate
13 our citizens on these events, the legacy of slavery, the sad
14 history of racism in this country, and the principles of human
15 rights and dignity in a civilized society.

16 It is the policy of the State of Illinois that the history
17 of the African slave trade, slavery in America, the depth of
18 their impact in our society, and the triumphs of
19 African-Americans and their significant contributions to the
20 development of this country is the proper concern of all
21 people, particularly students enrolled in the schools of the
22 State of Illinois.

23 It is therefore desirable to create a Commission that, as
24 an organized body and on a continuous basis, will survey,
25 design, encourage, and promote the implementation of education
26 and awareness programs in Illinois that are concerned with the
27 African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of
28 slavery in this country, and the contributions of
29 African-Americans in building our country; to develop
30 workshops, institutes, seminars, and other teacher training
31 activities designed to educate teachers on this subject matter;
32 and that will be responsible for the coordination of events on

1 a regular basis, throughout the State, that provide appropriate
2 memorialization of the events concerning the enslavement of
3 Africans and their descendants in America and their struggle
4 for freedom, liberty, and equality.

5 (b) Amistad Commission. The Amistad Commission is created
6 within the Agency. The Commission is named to honor the group
7 of enslaved Africans transported in 1839 on a vessel named the
8 Amistad who overthrew their captors and created an
9 international incident that was eventually argued before the
10 Supreme Court and that shed a growing light on the evils of the
11 slave trade and galvanized a growing abolitionist movement
12 towards demanding the end of slavery in the United States.

13 (c) Membership. The Commission shall consist of 15 members,
14 including 3 ex officio members: the State Superintendent of
15 Education or his or her designee, the Director of Commerce and
16 Economic Opportunity or his or her designee, and the Director
17 of Historic Sites and Preservation or his or her designee; and
18 12 public members. Public members shall be appointed as
19 follows:

20 (i) 2 members appointed by the President of the Senate
21 and one member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
22 Senate;

23 (ii) 2 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of
24 Representatives and one member appointed by the Minority
25 Leader of the House of Representatives; and

26 (iii) 6 members, no more than 4 of whom shall be of the
27 same political party, appointed by the Governor.

28 The public members shall be residents of this State, chosen
29 with due regard to broad geographic representation and ethnic
30 diversity, who have served actively in organizations that
31 educate the public on the history of the African slave trade,
32 the contributions of African-Americans to our society, and
33 civil rights issues.

34 Each public member of the Commission shall serve for a term
35 of 3 years, except that of the initial members so appointed:
36 one member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member

1 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and 2
2 members appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of one
3 year; the member appointed by the Minority Leader of the
4 Senate, one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of
5 Representatives, and 2 members appointed by the Governor shall
6 serve for terms of 2 years; and one member appointed by the
7 President of the Senate, the member appointed by the Minority
8 Leader of the House of Representatives, and 2 members appointed
9 by the Governor shall serve for terms of 3 years. Public
10 members shall be eligible for reappointment. They shall serve
11 until their successors are appointed and qualified, and the
12 term of the successor of any incumbent shall be calculated from
13 the expiration of the term of that incumbent. A vacancy
14 occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled in
15 the same manner as the original appointment, but for the
16 unexpired term only.

17 (d) Election of chairperson; meetings. At its first meeting
18 and annually thereafter, the Commission shall elect from among
19 its members a chairperson and other officers it considers
20 necessary or appropriate. After its first meeting, the
21 Commission shall meet at least quarterly, or more frequently at
22 the call of the chairperson or if requested by 9 or more
23 members.

24 (e) Quorum. A majority of the members of the Commission
25 constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a
26 meeting of the Commission. A majority of the members present
27 and serving is required for official action of the Commission.

28 (f) Public meeting. All business that the Commission is
29 authorized to perform shall be conducted at a public meeting of
30 the Commission, held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

31 (g) Freedom of Information. A writing prepared, owned,
32 used, in the possession of, or retained by the Commission in
33 the performance of an official function is subject to the
34 Freedom of Information Act.

35 (h) Compensation. The members of the Commission shall serve
36 without compensation, but shall be entitled to reimbursement

1 for all necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their
2 official duties as members of the Commission from funds
3 appropriated for that purpose. Reimbursement for travel,
4 meals, and lodging shall be in accordance with the rules of the
5 Governor's Travel Control Board.

6 (i) Duties. The Commission shall have the following
7 responsibilities and duties:

8 (1) To provide, based upon the collective interest of
9 the members and the knowledge and experience of the
10 members, assistance and advice to schools within the State
11 with respect to the implementation of education, awareness
12 programs, textbooks, and educational materials concerned
13 with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the
14 vestiges of slavery in this country, and the contributions
15 of African-Americans to our society.

16 (2) To survey and catalog the extent and breadth of
17 education concerning the African slave trade, slavery in
18 America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the
19 contributions of African-Americans to our society
20 presently being incorporated into the curricula and
21 textbooks and taught in the school systems of the State; to
22 inventory those African slave trade, American slavery, or
23 relevant African-American history memorials, exhibits, and
24 resources that should be incorporated into courses of study
25 at educational institutions, schools, and various other
26 locations throughout the State; and to assist the State
27 Board of Education and other State and educational agencies
28 in the development and implementation of African slave
29 trade, American slavery, and African-American history
30 education programs.

31 (3) To act as a liaison with textbook publishers,
32 schools, public, private, and nonprofit resource
33 organizations, and members of the United States Senate and
34 House of Representatives and the Illinois Senate and House
35 of Representatives in order to facilitate the inclusion of
36 the history of African slavery and of African-Americans in

1 this country in the curricula of public and nonpublic
2 schools.

3 (4) To compile a roster of individual volunteers who
4 are willing to share their knowledge and experience in
5 classrooms, seminars, and workshops with students and
6 teachers on the subject of the African slave trade,
7 American slavery, the impact of slavery on our society
8 today, and the contributions of African-Americans to our
9 country.

10 (5) To coordinate events memorializing the African
11 slave trade, American slavery, and the history of
12 African-Americans in this country that reflect the
13 contributions of African-Americans in overcoming the
14 burdens of slavery and its vestiges, and to seek volunteers
15 who are willing and able to participate in commemorative
16 events that will enhance student awareness of the
17 significance of the African slave trade, American slavery,
18 its historical impact, and the struggle for freedom.

19 (6) To prepare reports for the Governor and the General
20 Assembly regarding its findings and recommendations on
21 facilitating the inclusion of the African slave trade,
22 American slavery studies, African-American history, and
23 special programs in the educational system of the State.

24 (7) To develop, in consultation with the State Board of
25 Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of
26 information on the African slave trade, slavery in America,
27 the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the
28 contributions of African-Americans to our country. Every
29 school board shall incorporate the information in an
30 appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and
31 secondary school students.

32 (8) To solicit, receive, and accept appropriations,
33 gifts, and donations for Commission operations and
34 programs authorized under this Section.

35 (j) Commission requests for assistance. The Commission is
36 authorized to call upon any department, office, division, or

1 agency of the State, or of any county, municipality, or school
2 district of the State, to supply such data, program reports,
3 and other information, personnel, and assistance as it deems
4 necessary to discharge its responsibilities under this Act.
5 These departments, offices, divisions, and agencies shall, to
6 the extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of
7 this State, cooperate with the Commission and shall furnish it
8 with such information, personnel, and assistance as may be
9 necessary or helpful to accomplish the purposes of this Act.

10 (k) State Board of Education assistance. The State Board of
11 Education shall:

12 (1) Assist the Amistad Commission in marketing and
13 distributing to educators, administrators, and school
14 districts in the State educational information and other
15 materials on the African slave trade, slavery in America,
16 the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the
17 contributions of African-Americans to our society.

18 (2) Conduct at least one teacher workshop annually on
19 the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges
20 of slavery in this country, and the contributions of
21 African-Americans to our society.

22 (3) Assist the Amistad Commission in monitoring the
23 inclusion of slavery materials and curricula in the State's
24 educational system.

25 (4) Consult with the Amistad Commission to determine
26 ways it may survey, catalog, and extend slave trade and
27 American slavery education presently being taught in the
28 State's educational system.

29 The State Board of Education may, subject to the
30 availability of appropriations, hire additional staff and
31 consultants to carry out the duties and responsibilities
32 provided within this subsection (k).

33 (l) Report. The Commission shall report its activities and
34 findings, as required under subsection (i), to the Governor and
35 General Assembly on or before June 30, 2006, and biannually
36 thereafter.

1 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
2 becoming law.