

52:16A-86

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY CHECKLIST

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LAWS OF: 2002 **CHAPTER:** 75
NJSA: 52:16A-86 (Establishes Amistad Commission)
BILL NO: A1301 (Substituted for S1004)

SPONSOR(S): Payne and Stanley

DATE INTRODUCED: Pre-filed

COMMITTEE: **ASSEMBLY:** Education

SENATE: Education

AMENDED DURING PASSAGE: Yes

DATE OF PASSAGE: **ASSEMBLY:** June 24, 2002

SENATE: June 20, 2002

DATE OF APPROVAL: August 28, 2002

FOLLOWING ARE ATTACHED IF AVAILABLE:

[FINAL TEXT OF BILL](#) (1st reprint enacted)
(Amendments during passage denoted by superscript numbers)

A1301

[SPONSORS STATEMENT:](#) (Begins on page 5 of original bill) [Yes](#)

COMMITTEE STATEMENT: [ASSEMBLY:](#) [Yes](#)

[SENATE:](#) [Yes](#)

FLOOR AMENDMENT STATEMENTS: No

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE: No

S1004

[SPONSORS STATEMENT:](#) (Begins on page 5 of original bill) [Yes](#)
Bill and Sponsors Statement identical to A1301

COMMITTEE STATEMENT: **ASSEMBLY:** No

[SENATE:](#) [Yes](#)
Identical to Senate Statement for A1301

FLOOR AMENDMENT STATEMENTS: No

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE: No

VETO MESSAGE: No

[GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE ON SIGNING:](#) [Yes](#)

FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:

To check for circulating copies, contact New Jersey State Government Publications at the State Library (609) 278-2640 ext. 103 or <mailto:refdesk@njstatelib.org>

REPORTS:

No

HEARINGS:

No

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

Yes

"Panel to encourage teaching African-American history," 8-29-2002 Philadelphia Inquirer, pB11

"Black history is required reading," 8-29-2002 Star-Ledger, p.41

Law requires expanded black history in schools," 8-29-2002 The Times, p.A7

"NJ schools just add black history topics," 8-29-2002 Home News, p.A2

P.L. 2002, CHAPTER 75, *approved August 28, 2002*
Assembly, No. 1301 (*First Reprint*)

1 **AN ACT** establishing the Amistad Commission and supplementing
2 chapter ¹[4] 16A¹ of Title ¹[18A] 52¹ of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. During the period beginning late in the 15th century through the
9 19th century, millions of persons of African origin were enslaved and
10 brought to the Western Hemisphere, including the United States of
11 America; anywhere from between 20 to 50 percent of enslaved
12 Africans died during their journey to the Western Hemisphere; the
13 enslavement of Africans and their descendants was part of a concerted
14 effort of physical and psychological terrorism that deprived groups of
15 people of African descent the opportunity to preserve many of their
16 social, religious, political and other customs; the vestiges of slavery in
17 this country continued with the legalization of second class citizenship
18 status for African-Americans through Jim Crow laws, segregation and
19 other similar practices; the legacy of slavery has pervaded the fabric of
20 our society; and in spite of these events there are endless examples of
21 the triumphs of African-Americans and their significant contributions
22 to the development of this country.

23 b. All people should know of and remember the human carnage and
24 dehumanizing atrocities committed during the period of the African
25 slave trade and slavery in America and of the vestiges of slavery in this
26 country; and it is in fact vital to educate our citizens on these events,
27 the legacy of slavery, the sad history of racism in this country, and on
28 the principles of human rights and dignity in a civilized society;

29 c. It is the policy of the State of New Jersey that the history of the
30 African slave trade, slavery in America, the depth of their impact in
31 our society, and the triumphs of African-Americans and their
32 significant contributions to the development of this country is the
33 proper concern of all people, particularly students enrolled in the
34 schools of the State of New Jersey; and

35 d. It is therefore desirable to create a State-level commission,
36 which as an organized body, on a continuous basis, will survey, design,
37 encourage, and promote the implementation of education and
38 awareness programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave

EXPLANATION - Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹ Senate SED committee amendments adopted May 30, 2002.

1 trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and
2 the contributions of African-Americans in building our country; to
3 develop workshops, institutes, seminars, and other teacher training
4 activities designed to educate teachers on this subject matter; and
5 which will be responsible for the coordination of events on a regular
6 basis, throughout the State, that provide appropriate memorialization
7 of the events concerning the enslavement of Africans and their
8 descendants in America as well as their struggle for freedom and
9 liberty.

10
11 2. a. The Amistad Commission ¹, so named in honor of the group
12 of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who, while being
13 transported in 1839 on a vessel named the Amistad, gained their
14 freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their case
15 successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.¹ is
16 created and established in the Executive Branch of the State
17 Government. For the purposes of complying with the provisions of
18 Article V, Section IV, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution, the
19 commission is allocated within the Department of ¹[Education, but
20 notwithstanding this allocation, the commission shall be independent
21 of any supervision or control by the department or any board or officer
22 thereof] State¹.

23 The commission shall consist of ¹[~~21~~]19¹ members, including the
24 ¹Secretary of State or a designee, the¹ Commissioner of Education ¹or
25 a designee¹ and the chair of the executive board of the Presidents'
26 Council ¹or a designee¹, serving ex officio, and ¹[~~19~~]16¹ public
27 members.

28 Public members shall be appointed as follows: ¹[~~three~~]four¹ public
29 members ¹, no more than two of whom shall be of the same political
30 party.¹ shall be appointed by the President of the Senate; ¹[~~three~~]
31 four¹ public members ¹, no more than two of whom shall be of the
32 same political party.¹ shall be appointed by the Speaker of the General
33 Assembly; and ¹[~~13~~]eight¹ public members ¹, no more than four of
34 whom shall be of the same political party.¹ shall be appointed by the
35 Governor. The public members shall be residents of this State, chosen
36 with due regard to broad geographic representation and ethnic
37 diversity, who have ¹[~~served prominently as spokespersons for, or as~~
38 ~~leaders of, organizations which educate the public on~~] an interest in¹
39 the history of the African slave trade and slavery in America¹[~~,] and~~¹
40 the contributions of African-Americans to our society¹[~~or they shall~~
41 ~~be residents who are knowledgeable on these subjects.~~

42 The commission shall be known as the Amistad Commission in
43 honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who,
44 while being transported on a vessel named the Amistad in 1839, gained
45 their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their

- 1 case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court]¹.
- 2 b. Each public member of the commission shall serve for a term of
3 three years, except that of the initial members so appointed: one
4 member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
5 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and ¹[four] two¹
6 members appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of one year;
7 one member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
8 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and ¹[four] three¹
9 members appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of two
10 years; and ¹[one member] two members¹ appointed by the President
11 of the Senate, ¹[one member] two members¹ appointed by the
12 Speaker of the General Assembly, and ¹[five] three¹ members
13 appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of three years. Public
14 members shall be eligible for reappointment. They shall serve until
15 their successors are appointed and qualified, and the term of the
16 successor of any incumbent shall be calculated from the expiration of
17 the term of that incumbent. A vacancy occurring other than by
18 expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original
19 appointment but for the unexpired term only.
- 20 c. The members of the commission shall serve without
21 compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement for all necessary
22 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.
- 23 d. The ¹[commission shall annually elect a chairman from among
24 its members. It shall meet upon the call of the chairman or of a
25 majority of the commission members] Secretary of State, or a
26 designee, shall serve as the chair and the Commissioner of Education,
27 or a designee, shall serve as the vice-chair of the commission¹. The
28 presence of a majority of the authorized membership of the
29 commission shall be required for the conduct of official business.
- 30 e. The ¹[commission] New Jersey Historical Commission¹ shall
31 ¹[appoint an executive director, who shall]¹ serve ¹[at its pleasure
32 and shall be a person qualified by training and experience to perform
33 the duties of the office] as staff for the Amistad Commission. The
34 New Jersey Historical Commission may, subject to the availability of
35 appropriations, hire additional staff and consultants to carry out the
36 duties and responsibilities of the Amistad Commission¹.
- 37 ¹f. The Department of Education shall:
- 38 (1) assist the Amistad Commission in marketing and distributing to
39 educators, administrators and school districts in the State educational
40 information and other materials on the African slave trade, slavery in
41 America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions
42 of African-Americans to our society;
- 43 (2) conduct at least one teacher workshop annually on the African
44 slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country
45 and the contributions of African-Americans to our society;

1 (3) assist the Amistad Commission in monitoring the inclusion of
2 such materials and curricula in the State's educational system; and

3 (4) consult with the Amistad Commission to determine ways it may
4 survey, catalog, and extend slave trade and American slavery
5 education presently being incorporated into the Core Curriculum
6 Content Standards and taught in the State's educational system.¹

7
8 3. The ¹[commission] Amistad Commission¹ shall have the
9 following responsibilities and duties:

10 a. to provide, based upon the collective ¹interest of the members
11 and the¹ knowledge and experience of its ¹[members] staff and
12 consultants¹, assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools
13 within the State with respect to the implementation of education
14 ¹[and],¹ awareness programs¹, textbooks, and educational materials¹
15 concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the
16 vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-
17 Americans to our society;

18 b. ¹[to meet with county and local school officials and other
19 interested public and private organizations, including service
20 organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the planning,
21 coordination, modification and the inclusion of courses of study
22 dealing with the subject of the African slave trade, slavery in America,
23 the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contribution of African-
24 Americans to our society;

25 c.]¹ to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of education
26 concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges
27 of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans
28 to our society presently being incorporated into the curricula and
29 ¹textbooks and¹ taught in the school systems of the State; to inventory
30 those African slave trade, American slavery, or relevant African-
31 American history memorials, exhibits and resources which should be
32 incorporated into courses of study at educational institutions and
33 schools ¹[and various other locations]¹ throughout the State; and to
34 assist the ¹Department of¹ State ¹, the¹ Department of Education and
35 other ¹State and¹ educational agencies in the development and
36 implementation of African slave trade, American slavery and African-
37 American history education programs¹[. In furtherance of this
38 responsibility, the commission shall be authorized to contact and
39 cooperate with existing public or private nonprofit resource
40 organizations and may act as a liaison concerning the African slave
41 trade, American slavery education and African-American history to
42 members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives
43 and the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly]¹;

44 ¹c. to act as a liaison with textbook publishers, public and
45 nonpublic schools, public and private nonprofit resource organizations,
46 and members of the United States Senate and House of
47 Representatives and the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly in

1 order to facilitate the inclusion of the history of African slavery and
 2 of African-Americans in this country in the curricula of public and
 3 nonpublic schools;¹

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

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

17 f. to prepare reports for the Governor and the Legislature
 18 regarding its findings and recommendations on facilitating the
 19 inclusion of the African slave trade, American slavery studies, African-
 20 American history and special programs in the educational system of
 21 the State; ¹[and]¹

22 g. to develop, in consultation with the Department of Education,
 23 curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on the African
 24 slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country,
 25 and the contributions of African-Americans to our country. Every
 26 board of education shall incorporate the information in an appropriate
 27 place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students
 28 ¹[.] ; and

29 h. to solicit, receive, and accept appropriations, gifts and
 30 donations.¹

31
 32 4. a. The commission is authorized to call upon any department,
 33 office, division or agency of the State, or of any county, municipality
 34 or school district of the State, to supply such data, program reports
 35 and other information, personnel and assistance as it deems necessary
 36 to discharge its responsibilities under this act.

37 b. These departments, offices, divisions and agencies shall, to the
 38 extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of this State,
 39 cooperate with the commission and shall furnish it with such
 40 information, personnel and assistance as may be necessary or helpful
 41 to accomplish the purposes of this act.

42
 43 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

44
 45
 46
 47 Establishes the Amistad Commission to coordinate educational and
 48 other programs on slavery and African-American history.

ASSEMBLY, No. 1301

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 210th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2002 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman WILLIAM D. PAYNE

District 29 (Essex and Union)

Assemblyman CRAIG A. STANLEY

District 28 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:

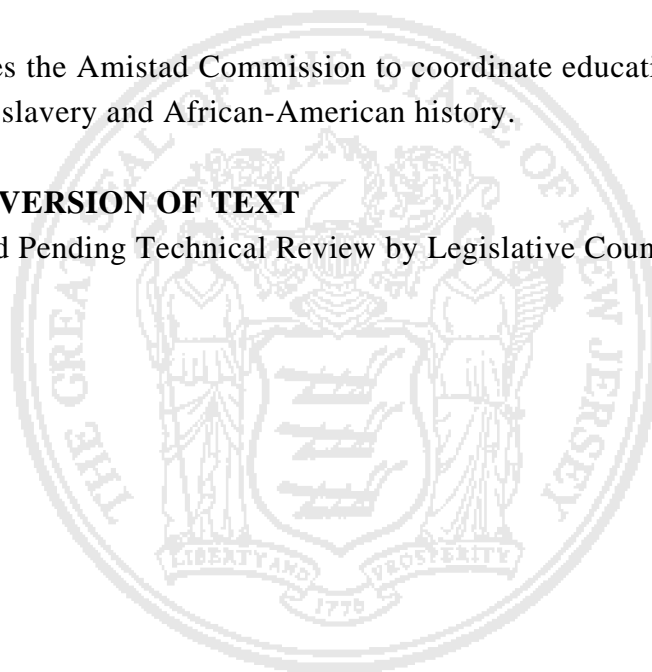
Assemblyman Tucker, Assemblywoman Watson Coleman, Assemblymen Gusciora, Wisniewski, Assemblywoman Friscia, Assemblymen Caraballo, Cohen, Assemblywoman Pou, Assemblymen Conaway, Conners, Green, T.Smith, Doria, Malone, Wolfe, Steele, Assemblywoman Weinberg, Assemblymen Asselta, R.Smith and Assemblywoman Greenstein

SYNOPSIS

Establishes the Amistad Commission to coordinate educational and other programs on slavery and African-American history.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/5/2002)

A1301 PAYNE, STANLEY

2

1 AN ACT establishing the Amistad Commission and supplementing
2 chapter 4 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6

7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. During the period beginning late in the 15th century through the
9 19th century, millions of persons of African origin were enslaved and
10 brought to the Western Hemisphere, including the United States of
11 America; anywhere from between 20 to 50 percent of enslaved
12 Africans died during their journey to the Western Hemisphere; the
13 enslavement of Africans and their descendants was part of a concerted
14 effort of physical and psychological terrorism that deprived groups of
15 people of African descent the opportunity to preserve many of their
16 social, religious, political and other customs; the vestiges of slavery in
17 this country continued with the legalization of second class citizenship
18 status for African-Americans through Jim Crow laws, segregation and
19 other similar practices; the legacy of slavery has pervaded the fabric of
20 our society; and in spite of these events there are endless examples of
21 the triumphs of African-Americans and their significant contributions
22 to the development of this country.

23 b. All people should know of and remember the human carnage and
24 dehumanizing atrocities committed during the period of the African
25 slave trade and slavery in America and of the vestiges of slavery in this
26 country; and it is in fact vital to educate our citizens on these events,
27 the legacy of slavery, the sad history of racism in this country, and on
28 the principles of human rights and dignity in a civilized society;

29 c. It is the policy of the State of New Jersey that the history of the
30 African slave trade, slavery in America, the depth of their impact in
31 our society, and the triumphs of African-Americans and their
32 significant contributions to the development of this country is the
33 proper concern of all people, particularly students enrolled in the
34 schools of the State of New Jersey; and

35 d. It is therefore desirable to create a State-level commission,
36 which as an organized body, on a continuous basis, will survey, design,
37 encourage, and promote the implementation of education and
38 awareness programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave
39 trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and
40 the contributions of African-Americans in building our country; to
41 develop workshops, institutes, seminars, and other teacher training
42 activities designed to educate teachers on this subject matter; and
43 which will be responsible for the coordination of events on a regular
44 basis, throughout the State, that provide appropriate memorialization
45 of the events concerning the enslavement of Africans and their

1 descendants in America as well as their struggle for freedom and
2 liberty.

3
4 2. a. The Amistad Commission is created and established in the
5 Executive Branch of the State Government. For the purposes of
6 complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV, paragraph 1
7 of the New Jersey Constitution, the commission is allocated within the
8 Department of Education, but notwithstanding this allocation, the
9 commission shall be independent of any supervision or control by the
10 department or any board or officer thereof.

11 The commission shall consist of 21 members, including the
12 Commissioner of Education and the chair of the executive board of the
13 Presidents' Council, serving ex officio, and 19 public members.

14 Public members shall be appointed as follows: three public members
15 shall be appointed by the President of the Senate; three public
16 members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly;
17 and 13 public members shall be appointed by the Governor. The
18 public members shall be residents of this State, chosen with due regard
19 to broad geographic representation and ethnic diversity, who have
20 served prominently as spokespersons for, or as leaders of,
21 organizations which educate the public on the history of the African
22 slave trade and slavery in America, the contributions of African-
23 Americans to our society or they shall be residents who are
24 knowledgeable on these subjects.

25 The commission shall be known as the Amistad Commission in
26 honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who,
27 while being transported on a vessel named the Amistad in 1839, gained
28 their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their
29 case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.

30 b. Each public member of the commission shall serve for a term of
31 three years, except that of the initial members so appointed: one
32 member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
33 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and four members
34 appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of one year; one
35 member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
36 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and four members
37 appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of two years; and one
38 member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
39 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and five members
40 appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of three years. Public
41 members shall be eligible for reappointment. They shall serve until
42 their successors are appointed and qualified, and the term of the
43 successor of any incumbent shall be calculated from the expiration of
44 the term of that incumbent. A vacancy occurring other than by
45 expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original
46 appointment but for the unexpired term only.

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1 c. The members of the commission shall serve without
2 compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement for all necessary
3 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

4 d. The commission shall annually elect a chairman from among its
5 members. It shall meet upon the call of the chairman or of a majority
6 of the commission members. The presence of a majority of the
7 authorized membership of the commission shall be required for the
8 conduct of official business.

9 e. The commission shall appoint an executive director, who shall
10 serve at its pleasure and shall be a person qualified by training and
11 experience to perform the duties of the office.

12
13 3. The commission shall have the following responsibilities and
14 duties:

15 a. To provide, based upon the collective knowledge and experience
16 of its members, assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools
17 within the State with respect to the implementation of education and
18 awareness programs concerned with the African slave trade, slavery
19 in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the
20 contributions of African-Americans to our society;

21 b. To meet with county and local school officials and other
22 interested public and private organizations, including service
23 organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the planning,
24 coordination, modification and the inclusion of courses of study
25 dealing with the subject of the African slave trade, slavery in America,
26 the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contribution of African-
27 Americans to our society;

28 c. To survey and catalog the extent and breadth of education
29 concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges
30 of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans
31 to our society presently being incorporated into the curricula and
32 taught in the school systems of the State; to inventory those African
33 slave trade, American slavery, or relevant African-American history
34 memorials, exhibits and resources which should be incorporated into
35 courses of study at educational institutions and schools and various
36 other locations throughout the State; and to assist the State
37 Department of Education and other educational agencies in the
38 development and implementation of African slave trade, American
39 slavery and African-American history education programs. In
40 furtherance of this responsibility, the commission shall be authorized
41 to contact and cooperate with existing public or private nonprofit
42 resource organizations and may act as a liaison concerning the African
43 slave trade, American slavery education and African-American history
44 to members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives
45 and the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly;

46 d. To compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing to

1 share their knowledge and experience in classrooms, seminars and
2 workshops with students and teachers on the subject of the African
3 slave trade, American slavery and the impact of slavery on our society
4 today, and the contributions of African-Americans to our country.

5 e. To coordinate events memorializing the African slave trade,
6 American slavery and the history of African-Americans in this country
7 that reflects the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming the
8 burdens of slavery and its vestiges, and to seek volunteers who are
9 willing and able to participate in commemorative events that will
10 enhance student awareness of the significance of the African slave
11 trade, American slavery, its historical impact, and the struggle for
12 freedom;

13 f. To prepare reports for the Governor and the Legislature
14 regarding its findings and recommendations on facilitating the
15 inclusion of the African slave trade, American slavery studies, African-
16 American history and special programs in the educational system of
17 the State; and

18 g. To develop, in consultation with the Department of Education,
19 curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on the African
20 slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country,
21 and the contributions of African-Americans to our country. Every
22 board of education shall incorporate the information in an appropriate
23 place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.
24

25 4. a. The commission is authorized to call upon any department,
26 office, division or agency of the State, or of any county, municipality
27 or school district of the State, to supply such data, program reports
28 and other information, personnel and assistance as it deems necessary
29 to discharge its responsibilities under this act.

30 b. These departments, offices, divisions and agencies shall, to the
31 extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of this State,
32 cooperate with the commission and shall furnish it with such
33 information, personnel and assistance as may be necessary or helpful
34 to accomplish the purposes of this act.

35

36 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

37

38

39

STATEMENT

40

41 This bill establishes a State-level commission to educate the citizens
42 and students of New Jersey about the historical events associated with
43 the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in
44 this country and the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming
45 these obstacles to contribute to the development of this country. This
46 commission will be known as the New Jersey Amistad Commission in

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1 honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who,
2 while being transported on a vessel named the Amistad in 1839, gained
3 their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their
4 case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.

5 The commission will, on a continuous basis, survey, design,
6 encourage, and promote implementation of educational and awareness
7 programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave trade,
8 slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the
9 contributions of African-Americans in building our country. The
10 commission will develop workshops, institutes, seminars, and other
11 teacher training activities designed to educate teachers on this subject
12 matter. The commission will be responsible for the coordination of
13 events that will provide appropriate memorialization of the events
14 associated with the enslavement of Africans and their descendants in
15 America as well as their struggle for freedom and liberty.

16 The commission will consist of 21 members, including the
17 Commissioner of Education and the chair of the executive board of the
18 Presidents' Council, serving ex officio, and 19 public members. The
19 public members will be residents of this State, chosen with due regard
20 to broad geographic representation and ethnic diversity, who have
21 served prominently as spokespersons for, or as leaders of,
22 organizations which educate the public on the history of the African
23 slave trade, slavery in America, and African-American history, or they
24 will be residents who are knowledgeable on this subject matter.

25 The commission will have the following responsibilities and duties:
26 to provide, based upon the collective knowledge and experience of its
27 members, assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools with
28 respect to the implementation of education and awareness programs
29 concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the
30 vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-
31 Americans to our society; to meet with county and local school
32 officials and other interested public and private organizations,
33 including service organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the
34 planning, coordination or modification of courses of study dealing with
35 the subject of the African slave trade, slavery in America and African-
36 American history; to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of the
37 education concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America and
38 African-American history presently being incorporated into the
39 curricula and taught in the school systems of the State; to inventory
40 those African slave trade, American slavery or African-American
41 history memorials, exhibits and resources which should be
42 incorporated into courses of study at various locations throughout the
43 State; to assist the State Department of Education and other
44 educational agencies in the development and implementation of
45 African slave trade, American slavery and African-American history
46 education programs; and, to develop, in consultation with the

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1 Department of Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of
2 information on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges
3 of slavery in this country, and the contribution of African-Americans
4 to our country. The bill directs every board of education to
5 incorporate the instruction in an appropriate place in the curriculum of
6 elementary and secondary school students.

7 In furtherance of this responsibility, the commission will be
8 authorized to contact and cooperate with existing public or private
9 nonprofit resource organizations and individuals and may act as a
10 liaison concerning the African slave trade, American slavery education
11 and African-American history to members of the United States Senate
12 and House of Representatives and the New Jersey Senate and General
13 Assembly; to compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing
14 to share their knowledge and experience in classrooms, seminars and
15 workshops on the subject of the African slave trade, American slavery,
16 the vestiges of slavery in this country and African-American history;
17 to coordinate events memorializing the African slave trade, American
18 slavery and African-American history; to seek volunteers who are
19 willing and able to participate in commemorative events that will
20 enhance student awareness of the significance of the African slave
21 trade, American slavery and African-American history; and to prepare
22 reports for the Governor and the Legislature regarding its findings and
23 recommendations in facilitating the inclusion of African slave trade,
24 American slavery studies, African-American history and special
25 programs into the educational system of the State.

26 This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2000-2001 session
27 pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes
28 required by technical review, which has been performed.

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1301

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 4, 2002

The Assembly Education Committee favorably reports Assembly Bill No. 1301.

This bill establishes a State-level commission to educate the citizens and students of New Jersey about the historical events associated with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming these obstacles to contribute to the development of this country. This commission will be known as the New Jersey Amistad Commission in honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who, while being transported on a vessel named the Amistad in 1839, gained their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.

The commission will, on a continuous basis, survey, design, encourage, and promote implementation of educational and awareness programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans in building our country. The commission will develop workshops, institutes, seminars, and other teacher training activities designed to educate teachers on this subject matter. The commission will be responsible for the coordination of events that provide appropriate memorialization of the events associated with the enslavement of Africans and their descendants in America as well as their struggle for freedom and liberty.

The commission will consist of 21 members, including the Commissioner of Education and the chair of the executive board of the Presidents' Council, serving ex officio, and 19 public members. The public members will be residents of this State, chosen with due regard to broad geographic representation and ethnic diversity, who have served prominently as spokespersons for, or as leaders of, organizations which educate the public on the history of the African slave trade, slavery in America, and African-American history, or they will be residents who are knowledgeable on this subject matter.

The commission will have the following responsibilities and duties: to provide, based upon the collective knowledge and experience of its members, assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools with respect to the implementation of education and awareness programs

concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans to our society; to meet with county and local school officials and other interested public and private organizations, including service organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the planning, coordination or modification of courses of study dealing with the subject of the African slave trade, slavery in America and African-American history; to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of the education concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America and African-American history presently being incorporated into the curricula and taught in the school systems of the State; to inventory those African slave trade, American slavery or African-American history memorials, exhibits and resources which should be incorporated into courses of study at various locations throughout the State; to assist the State Department of Education and other educational agencies in the development and implementation of African slave trade, American slavery and African-American history education programs; and to develop, in consultation with the Department of Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the contribution of African-Americans to our country. The bill directs every board of education to incorporate the instruction in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

In furtherance of this responsibility, the commission will be authorized to contact and cooperate with existing public or private nonprofit resource organizations and individuals and may act as a liaison concerning the African slave trade, American slavery education and African-American history to members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives and the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly; to compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing to share their knowledge and experience in classrooms, seminars and workshops on the subject of the African slave trade, American slavery, the vestiges of slavery in this country and African-American history; to coordinate events memorializing the African slave trade, American slavery and African-American history; to seek volunteers who are willing and able to participate in commemorative events that will enhance student awareness of the significance of the African slave trade, American slavery and African-American history; and to prepare reports for the Governor and the Legislature regarding its findings and recommendations in facilitating the inclusion of African slave trade, American slavery studies, African-American history and special programs into the educational system of the State.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2002-2003 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1301

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 30, 2002

The Senate Education Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1301

As amended, this bill establishes a State-level commission to educate the citizens and students of New Jersey about the historical events associated with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming these obstacles to contribute to the development of this country. The commission will be known as the New Jersey Amistad Commission in honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who, while being transported in 1839 on a vessel named the Amistad, gained their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.

The commission, allocated to the Department of State, will consist of 19 members, including the Secretary of State, the Commissioner of Education and the chair of the executive board of the Presidents' Council, serving ex officio, and 16 public members selected on a bipartisan basis, four each to be appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly, and eight to be appointed by the Governor. The Secretary of State, or a designee, will serve as the chair and the Commissioner of Education, or a designee, will serve as vice-chair of the commission. The New Jersey Historical Commission is directed to serve as staff for the Amistad Commission.

The Department of Education will assist the Amistad Commission in distributing to school districts information on the African slave trade and the contributions of African-Americans to our society; conduct at least one teacher workshop annually on those subjects; assist the commission in monitoring the inclusion of those subjects in school curricula; and consult with the commission on ways to expand those subjects in the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

The commission will have the following responsibilities and duties: to provide assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools with respect to the implementation of education and awareness programs, textbooks and educational materials concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and

the contributions of African-Americans to our society; to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of the education concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America and African-American history presently being incorporated into the curricula and textbooks and taught in the school systems of the State; to act as a liaison with textbook publishers and government officials to facilitate the inclusion of these subjects in the curricula of schools; to compile a roster of volunteers who are willing to share their knowledge and experience on these subjects with teachers and students; to coordinate events memorializing these subjects; to prepare reports to the Governor and Legislature; to develop, in consultation with the Department of Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of these subjects; and to solicit, receive, and accept appropriations, gifts and donations. The bill directs every board of education to incorporate the instruction in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

Amendments were adopted which: 1) allocate the commission to the Department of State; 2) revise the membership of the commission; 3) provide that the New Jersey Historical Commission will serve as staff for the commission; 4) specify a list of responsibilities for the Department of Education; and 5) add to the duties of the commission the responsibility to monitor the inclusion of the subjects of the commission in the textbooks used by school districts.

As reported, this bill is identical to S-1004 with Senate committee amendments.

SENATE, No. 1004

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
210th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 21, 2002

Sponsored by:

Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER

District 15 (Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes the Amistad Commission to coordinate educational and other programs on slavery and African-American history.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing the Amistad Commission and supplementing
2 chapter 4 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. During the period beginning late in the 15th century through the
9 19th century, millions of persons of African origin were enslaved and
10 brought to the Western Hemisphere, including the United States of
11 America; anywhere from between 20 to 50 percent of enslaved
12 Africans died during their journey to the Western Hemisphere; the
13 enslavement of Africans and their descendants was part of a concerted
14 effort of physical and psychological terrorism that deprived groups of
15 people of African descent the opportunity to preserve many of their
16 social, religious, political and other customs; the vestiges of slavery
17 in this country continued with the legalization of second class
18 citizenship status for African-Americans through Jim Crow laws,
19 segregation and other similar practices; the legacy of slavery has
20 pervaded the fabric of our society; and in spite of these events, there
21 are endless examples of the triumphs of African-Americans and their
22 significant contributions to the development of this country;

23 b. All people should know of and remember the human carnage and
24 dehumanizing atrocities committed during the period of the African
25 slave trade and slavery in America and of the vestiges of slavery in this
26 country; and it is in fact vital to educate our citizens on these events,
27 the legacy of slavery, the sad history of racism in this country, and on
28 the principles of human rights and dignity in a civilized society;

29 c. It is the policy of the State of New Jersey that the history of the
30 African slave trade, slavery in America, the depth of their impact in
31 our society, and the triumphs of African-Americans and their
32 significant contributions to the development of this country is the
33 proper concern of all people, particularly students enrolled in the
34 schools of the State of New Jersey; and

35 d. It is therefore desirable to create a State-level commission,
36 which as an organized body, on a continuous basis, will survey, design,
37 encourage, and promote the implementation of education and
38 awareness programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave
39 trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and
40 the contributions of African-Americans in building our country; to
41 develop workshops, institutes, seminars, and other teacher training
42 activities designed to educate teachers on this subject matter; and
43 which will be responsible for the coordination of events on a regular
44 basis, throughout the State, that provide appropriate memorialization
45 of the events concerning the enslavement of Africans and their
46 descendants in America as well as their struggle for freedom and

1 liberty.

2

3 2. a. The Amistad Commission is created and established in the
4 Executive Branch of the State Government. For the purposes of
5 complying with the provisions of Article V, Section IV, paragraph 1
6 of the New Jersey Constitution, the commission is allocated within the
7 Department of Education, but notwithstanding this allocation, the
8 commission shall be independent of any supervision or control by the
9 department or any board or officer thereof.

10 The commission shall consist of 21 members, including the
11 Commissioner of Education and the chair of the executive board of the
12 Presidents' Council, serving ex officio, and 19 public members.

13 Public members shall be appointed as follows: three public members
14 shall be appointed by the President of the Senate; three public
15 members shall be appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly;
16 and 13 public members shall be appointed by the Governor. The
17 public members shall be residents of this State, chosen with due regard
18 to broad geographic representation and ethnic diversity, who have
19 served prominently as spokespersons for, or as leaders of,
20 organizations which educate the public on the history of the African
21 slave trade and slavery in America, the contributions of African-
22 Americans to our society or they shall be residents who are
23 knowledgeable on these subjects.

24 The commission shall be known as the Amistad Commission in
25 honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who,
26 while being transported on a vessel named the Amistad in 1839, gained
27 their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their
28 case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.

29 b. Each public member of the commission shall serve for a term of
30 three years, except that of the initial members so appointed: one
31 member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
32 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and four members
33 appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of one year; one
34 member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
35 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and four members
36 appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of two years; and one
37 member appointed by the President of the Senate, one member
38 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, and five members
39 appointed by the Governor shall serve for terms of three years. Public
40 members shall be eligible for reappointment. They shall serve until
41 their successors are appointed and qualified, and the term of the
42 successor of any incumbent shall be calculated from the expiration of
43 the term of that incumbent. A vacancy occurring other than by
44 expiration of term shall be filled in the same manner as the original
45 appointment but for the unexpired term only.

46 c. The members of the commission shall serve without

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1 compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement for all necessary
2 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

3 d. The commission shall annually elect a chairman from among its
4 members. It shall meet upon the call of the chairman or of a majority
5 of the commission members. The presence of a majority of the
6 authorized membership of the commission shall be required for the
7 conduct of official business.

8 e. The commission shall appoint an executive director, who shall
9 serve at its pleasure and shall be a person qualified by training and
10 experience to perform the duties of the office.

11

12 3. The commission shall have the following responsibilities and
13 duties:

14 a. To provide, based upon the collective knowledge and experience
15 of its members, assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools
16 within the State with respect to the implementation of education and
17 awareness programs concerned with the African slave trade, slavery
18 in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the
19 contributions of African-Americans to our society;

20 b. To meet with county and local school officials and other
21 interested public and private organizations, including service
22 organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the planning,
23 coordination, modification and the inclusion of courses of study
24 dealing with the subject of the African slave trade, slavery in America,
25 the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contribution of African-
26 Americans to our society;

27 c. To survey and catalog the extent and breadth of education
28 concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges
29 of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans
30 to our society presently being incorporated into the curricula and
31 taught in the school systems of the State; to inventory those African
32 slave trade, American slavery, or relevant African-American history
33 memorials, exhibits and resources which should be incorporated into
34 courses of study at educational institutions and schools and various
35 other locations throughout the State; and to assist the State
36 Department of Education and other educational agencies in the
37 development and implementation of African slave trade, American
38 slavery and African-American history education programs. In
39 furtherance of this responsibility, the commission shall be authorized
40 to contact and cooperate with existing public or private nonprofit
41 resource organizations and may act as a liaison concerning the African
42 slave trade, American slavery education and African-American history
43 to members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives
44 and the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly;

45 d. To compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing to
46 share their knowledge and experience in classrooms, seminars and

1 workshops with students and teachers on the subject of the African
2 slave trade, American slavery and the impact of slavery on our society
3 today, and the contributions of African-Americans to our country.

4 e. To coordinate events memorializing the African slave trade,
5 American slavery and the history of African-Americans in this country
6 that reflects the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming the
7 burdens of slavery and its vestiges, and to seek volunteers who are
8 willing and able to participate in commemorative events that will
9 enhance student awareness of the significance of the African slave
10 trade, American slavery, its historical impact, and the struggle for
11 freedom;

12 f. To prepare reports for the Governor and the Legislature
13 regarding its findings and recommendations on facilitating the
14 inclusion of the African slave trade, American slavery studies, African-
15 American history and special programs in the educational system of
16 the State and;

17 g. To develop, in consultation with the Department of Education,
18 curriculum guidelines for the teaching of information on the African
19 slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country,
20 and the contributions of African-Americans to our country. Every
21 board of education shall incorporate the information in an appropriate
22 place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

23

24 4. a. The commission is authorized to call upon any department,
25 office, division or agency of the State, or on any county, municipality
26 or school district of the State, to supply such data, program reports
27 and other information, personnel and assistance as it deems necessary
28 to discharge its responsibilities under this act.

29 b. These departments, offices, divisions and agencies shall, to the
30 extent possible and not inconsistent with any other law of this State,
31 cooperate with the commission and shall furnish it with such
32 information, personnel and assistance as may be necessary or helpful
33 to accomplish the purposes of this act.

34

35 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

36

37

38

STATEMENT

39

40 This bill establishes a State-level commission to educate the citizens
41 and students of New Jersey about the historical events associated with
42 the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in
43 this country and the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming
44 these obstacles to contribute to the development of this country. This
45 commission will be known as the New Jersey Amistad Commission in
46 honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who,

1 while being transported on a vessel named the Amistad in 1839, gained
2 their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their
3 case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.

4 The commission will, on a continuous basis, survey, design,
5 encourage, and promote implementation of educational and awareness
6 programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave trade,
7 slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the
8 contributions of African-Americans in building our country. The
9 commission will develop workshops, institutes, seminars, and other
10 teacher training activities designed to educate teachers on this subject
11 matter. The commission will be responsible for the coordination of
12 events that will provide appropriate memorialization of the events
13 associated with the enslavement of Africans and their descendants in
14 America as well as their struggle for freedom and liberty.

15 The commission will consist of 21 members, including the
16 Commissioner of Education and the chair of the executive board of the
17 Presidents' Council, serving ex officio, and 19 public members. The
18 public members will be residents of this State, chosen with due regard
19 to broad geographic representation and ethnic diversity, who have
20 served prominently as spokespersons for, or as leaders of,
21 organizations which educate the public on the history of the African
22 slave trade, slavery in America, and African-American history, or they
23 will be residents who are knowledgeable on this subject matter.

24 The commission will have the following responsibilities and duties:
25 to provide, based upon the collective knowledge and experience of its
26 members, assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools with
27 respect to the implementation of education and awareness programs
28 concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the
29 vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-
30 Americans to our society; to meet with county and local school
31 officials and other interested public and private organizations,
32 including service organizations, for the purpose of assisting with the
33 planning, coordination or modification of courses of study dealing with
34 the subject of the African slave trade, slavery in America and African-
35 American history; to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of the
36 education concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America and
37 African-American history presently being incorporated into the
38 curricula and taught in the school systems of the State; to inventory
39 those African slave trade, American slavery or African-American
40 history memorials, exhibits and resources which should be
41 incorporated into courses of study at various locations throughout the
42 State; to assist the State Department of Education and other
43 educational agencies in the development and implementation of
44 African slave trade, American slavery and African-American history
45 education programs; and, to develop, in consultation with the
46 Department of Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of

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7

1 information on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges
2 of slavery in this country, and the contribution of African-Americans
3 to our country. The bill directs every board of education to
4 incorporate the instruction in an appropriate place in the curriculum of
5 elementary and secondary school students.

6 In furtherance of this responsibility, the commission will be
7 authorized to contact and cooperate with existing public or private
8 nonprofit resource organizations and individuals and may act as a
9 liaison concerning the African slave trade, American slavery education
10 and African-American history to members of the United States Senate
11 and House of Representatives and the New Jersey Senate and General
12 Assembly; to compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing
13 to share their knowledge and experience in classrooms, seminars and
14 workshops on the subject of the African slave trade, American slavery,
15 the vestiges of slavery in this country and African-American history;
16 to coordinate events memorializing the African slave trade, American
17 slavery and African-American history; to seek volunteers who are
18 willing and able to participate in commemorative events that will
19 enhance student awareness of the significance of the African slave
20 trade, American slavery and African-American history; and to prepare
21 reports for the Governor and the Legislature regarding its findings and
22 recommendations in facilitating the inclusion of African slave trade,
23 American slavery studies, African-American history and special
24 programs into the educational system of the State.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1004

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 30, 2002

The Senate Education Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 1004.

As amended, this bill establishes a State-level commission to educate the citizens and students of New Jersey about the historical events associated with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and the contributions of African-Americans in overcoming these obstacles to contribute to the development of this country. The commission will be known as the New Jersey Amistad Commission in honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by Joseph Cinque who, while being transported in 1839 on a vessel named the Amistad, gained their freedom after overthrowing the crew and eventually having their case successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court.

The commission, allocated to the Department of State, will consist of 19 members, including the Secretary of State, the Commissioner of Education and the chair of the executive board of the Presidents' Council, serving ex officio, and 16 public members selected on a bipartisan basis, four each to be appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly, and eight to be appointed by the Governor. The Secretary of State, or a designee, will serve as the chair and the Commissioner of Education, or a designee, will serve as vice-chair of the commission. The New Jersey Historical Commission is directed to serve as staff for the Amistad Commission.

The Department of Education will assist the Amistad Commission in distributing to school districts information on the African slave trade and the contributions of African-Americans to our society; conduct at least one teacher workshop annually on those subjects; assist the commission in monitoring the inclusion of those subjects in school curricula; and consult with the commission on ways to expand those subjects in the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

The commission will have the following responsibilities and duties: to provide assistance and advice to public and nonpublic schools with respect to the implementation of education and awareness programs, textbooks and educational materials concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country and

the contributions of African-Americans to our society; to survey and catalog the extent and breadth of the education concerning the African slave trade, slavery in America and African-American history presently being incorporated into the curricula and textbooks and taught in the school systems of the State; to act as a liaison with textbook publishers and government officials to facilitate the inclusion of these subjects in the curricula of schools; to compile a roster of volunteers who are willing to share their knowledge and experience on these subjects with teachers and students; to coordinate events memorializing these subjects; to prepare reports to the Governor and Legislature; to develop, in consultation with the Department of Education, curriculum guidelines for the teaching of these subjects; and to solicit, receive, and accept appropriations, gifts and donations. The bill directs every board of education to incorporate the instruction in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

Amendments were adopted which: 1) allocate the commission to the Department of State; 2) revise the membership of the commission; 3) provide that the New Jersey Historical Commission will serve as staff for the commission; 4) specify a list of responsibilities for the Department of Education; and 5) add to the duties of the commission the responsibility to monitor the inclusion of the subjects of the commission in the textbooks used by school districts.

As reported, this bill is identical to A-1301 with Senate committee amendments.

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Press Releases

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

Contact: Kevin Davitt
609-777-2600

RELEASE: August 27, 2002

[Previous Screen](#)

McGreevey Signs Amistad Legislation to Incorporate African-American History into NJ Curriculum

(NEWARK) — Governor James E. McGreevey today signed legislation aimed at incorporating African-American history into the traditional curriculum of New Jersey’s schools.

The “Amistad Bill” (A1301) was sponsored by Assemblymen William D. Payne and Craig A. Stanley. The legislation seeks to foster and create a greater level of academic knowledge within our school children. The bill creates an “Amistad Commission” in honor of the enslaved Africans who gained their freedom after overthrowing the crew of the Amistad cargo ship en route from Havana in 1839. The commission will promote wider implementation of educational awareness programs regarding the African slave trade, slavery in America and the many contributions African Americans have made over the course of United States history.

The Amistad Commission will consist of 19 members, including the Secretary of State, the Commissioner of Education, the Chair of the Executive Board of the President’s Council and 16 public members. The commission will also designate appropriate textbooks that accurately chronicle the African-American experience in the United States.

Following the bill signing, Governor McGreevey was joined by Secretary of State Regena Thomas in announcing the “Harriet Tubman-William Still New Jersey Underground Railroad Journey.”

Beginning on September 29, 2002, Governor McGreevey will join with Secretary of State Thomas and the people of New Jersey in celebrating the State’s Underground Railroad heritage. Named in honor of two of the Underground Railroad’s most celebrated figures, the “Harriet Tubman-William Still New Jersey Underground Railroad Journey” will follow in the footsteps of freedom over a period of two weeks, by retracing 180 miles of the legendary network from Cumberland County to Hudson County. The walk will also include visits to some of New Jersey’s Underground Railroad sites and communities along the way.

“This celebration will be a tribute to those brave souls who sacrificed, aided and followed this trail to freedom,” said McGreevey.