

Governor Signs Resolution Apologizing for Delaware's Role in Slavery During Commemoration of Black History Month

Dover, DE – Governor Jack Markell today joined legislators, civil rights and civic leaders, educators, and community members to mark Black History Month and sign a resolution that apologizes for Delaware's historic role in slavery, acknowledges its painful and lasting legacy, and commits to embracing a future free of racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination.

Markell signed [House Joint Resolution 10](#), which was sponsored by Representative Stephanie T. Bolden (D-Wilmington East) and Senate Majority Whip Margaret Rose Henry (D-Wilmington East) and passed overwhelmingly in the General Assembly in January. Today's action follows other efforts to address historic injustices, including the recent issuance of a [pardon for Underground Railroad conductor Samuel Burris](#).

"Today we affirm that we refuse to forget our past," Markell said. "We accept the responsibility of tearing down the barriers that face so many of our neighbors as a result of the abhorrent laws and practices carried out against African-Americans. But we also assume this responsibility with enthusiasm, because we know what's possible when we give more of our people the chance to make the most of their talents. And we know that every step we take toward equality of opportunity brings us closer to the society we dream of for us and for our children."

“Delaware was one of the last states to abolish slavery, which is not something to be proud of here in the First State,” Rep. Bolden said. “Most of the states that had slavery have apologized for their historical role in such an inhumane practice, and I’m proud that Delaware is taking that step today. My colleagues in the General Assembly understood that while none of us personally played a part in this chapter in our history, it is incumbent upon all of us today to correct the mistakes of the past and to help with the healing that this legislation brings. It is an important step forward for all of us as a society.”

“While the shackles of slavery are a distant memory, the struggle against racism and prejudice remains today,” said Senator Henry. “Individually, Delawareans do not bear responsibility for the horrors of slavery, but today we acknowledged collectively that our trajectory as a state and nation will be shaped by how we are able to reconcile and grow from our past.”

Today’s event was hosted by the [Delaware Public Archives](#) which, as part of its commemoration of Black History month, also unveiled a new exhibit celebrating the 125th Anniversary of Delaware State University.

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