

# 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.