

Commission on Human Rights

Kentucky Human Rights Commission urges legislators to remove Jefferson Davis statue from capitol

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Contact Information: Media Contact: Victoria Stephens

Mrs. Stephens's direct phone: 502.641.0760

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1.800.292.5566

August 20 2015 Louisville, Kentucky USA – The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights Board of Commissioners at its meeting today unanimously passed a resolution urging legislators to remove from the capitol rotunda the statue of Jefferson Davis. The Kentucky Historic Properties Commission recently decided to keep the statue in its current location rather than relocate it to a history center or museum.

Kentucky Human Rights Commissioner Henry Curtis of Louisville, Ky., introduced the resolution to the commission board today.

Commissioner Curtis said about the statue: “The commission was created by the General Assembly to exercise a leadership role and the state’s public policy of fair and constitutional treatment of all its citizens. The state’s continuation of the Jefferson Davis statue in the Capitol is contrary to its great public policy of fair and equitable treatment for all of its citizens in view of Mr. Davis’s unfortunate and rejected policy of dissolution of the union and perpetuation of slavery.”

The resolution states:

“Given the Commission’s essential function, duty and responsibility to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all the citizens of the Commonwealth, it is only right and fitting that we join numerous public officials and political leaders, and others throughout our nation and state, to encourage and recommend the removal of the symbols of the Confederacy from our state and national government buildings and tax-supported facilities, including its flags, monuments and statues honoring its leaders such as Jefferson Davis;

“The statue of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America, stands in a place of prominence and honor in the rotunda of our state Capitol within a few feet of the statue of President Abraham Lincoln.

“The Confederate cause, over which Jefferson Davis presided, fought to continue the immoral institution of slavery, resulting in a bloody Civil War that divided, and nearly destroyed our

nation, in which hundreds of thousands of our nation's citizens were maimed and killed, including more than ten thousand from our great Commonwealth.

"For many of our citizens, of all races, colors and creeds, the symbols of the Confederacy, including its flags, monuments and statues, still represent a time, not so long ago, in which African Americans were routinely enslaved, tortured, lynched, whipped, castrated, branded, and subjected to a multitude of other horrors too numerous to mention, by law, custom and common practice.

"Allowing the statue of the President of the Confederacy to remain in our State Capitol's rotunda is offensive to our citizens and an affront to the memory and sacrifices of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who gave life and limb to fight and defeat the Confederacy and its shameful institution of slavery.

"There should be no place of honor within our governmental buildings and tax supported facilities for the flags, monuments, statues, and symbols of the Confederacy, that only serve to divide our state and communities along racial lines and symbolize support for bigotry, prejudice, segregation and intolerance – we must not honor the dishonorable, nor glorify a period of our history unworthy of glorification -- we must learn from history, but never honor the symbols of hate and intolerance.

"The Commission is both discouraged and saddened by the decision of the State Historic Properties Advisory Commission to keep the Jefferson Davis statue in the Capitol rotunda, and strongly disagrees with the Advisory Commission's declaration that the rotunda is an "educational place" that provides a context for learning. In fact, by its very nature, the rotunda is a place of honor in the very heart of the State Capitol. There is no greater or more prestigious and prominent governmental building, than the Capitol rotunda.

"If the purpose of allowing the statue of Jefferson Davis to remain in the State Capitol rotunda is to provide a clearer understanding of Kentucky's role in the Civil War, then a far more appropriate place for it to stand would be the Capitol Education Center or the Kentucky History Center, both of which are located a short distance from the Capitol. Our education centers and museums are dedicated and equipped to teach the lessons of our past, without glorifying its evils.

"The senseless tragedy of the church killings in Charleston, South Carolina, for which the Commission joins the nation in its shock, horror and grief, serves as a grim reminder that symbols of hate, bigotry and ignorance matter – there should be no place in our government buildings and tax-supported facilities for symbols of hate and intolerance such as the Confederate flag, monuments and statues of Confederate leaders."

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