

House Bill 108

By: Representatives Bryant of the 160th, Stephens of the 161st, Stephens of the 164th, Carter of the 159th, Gordon of the 162nd, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50, relating to other state symbols, so as to provide
2 that the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum shall be the official state civil rights
3 museum; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

4 **SECTION 1.**

5 WHEREAS, Savannah has a long and storied role in the civil rights movement, beginning
6 with a meeting between General Sherman and Secretary of War Stanton and twelve Black
7 leaders on January 12, 1865, to discuss the matter of emancipation; and

8 WHEREAS, the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum, recently named "Georgia's Best
9 New History Museum" by the Georgia Journal, is named in honor of the late Dr. Ralph Mark
10 Gilbert. The father of Savannah's modern day Civil Rights Movement and fearless National
11 Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leader was known for much
12 more than his outspoken campaigns for civil rights. He was a nationally known orator,
13 pulpiteer, and playwright, producing religious dramas, known as passion plays, throughout
14 the country; and

15 WHEREAS, Dr. Gilbert served as pastor of historic First African Baptist Church on Franklin
16 Square in Savannah for 16 years. In 1942, he reorganized the Savannah Branch NAACP,
17 served as president for eight years and convened the first state conference. Branches from
18 Savannah, Brunswick, Dublin, Atlanta, Columbus, Macon, Albany and three other branches
19 whose identities are uncertain, attended and elected Rev. Ralph Mark Gilbert president.
20 Under his courageous leadership, more than forty NAACP branches were organized in
21 Georgia by 1950; and

22 WHEREAS, Georgia's best new history museum chronicles the civil rights struggle of
23 Georgia's oldest African American community from slavery to the present. Three floors of
24 handsome photographic and interactive exhibits, includes an NAACP Organization exhibit,

25 a fiber optic map of 87 significant civil rights sites/events, a lunch counter where "sit ins"
26 occurred, segregation exhibits, and video presentation are all part of the continuous education
27 of the public on the history of the civil rights struggle in Savannah and Georgia. The
28 museum is located in historic Savannah in a five level building that was erected in 1914 as
29 the Wage Earners Savings and Loan Bank for Black Savannahians, the largest Black bank
30 in the country at that time.

31 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

32 **SECTION 2.**

33 Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50, relating to other state symbols, is amended by adding a
34 new Code section to read as follows:

35 "50-3-85.

36 The Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum is designated the official Georgia civil rights
37 museum."

38 **SECTION 3.**

39 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.