



Sen. David Koehler

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1 AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 1607

2 AMENDMENT NO. _____. Amend Senate Bill 1607 by replacing
3 everything after the enacting clause with the following:

4 "Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Illinois Freedom Trails Commission Act.

6 Section 5. Definitions. As used in this Act:

7 "Commission" means the Illinois Freedom Trails Commission.

8 "Department" means the Department of Natural Resources.

9 Section 10. Establishment of Commission.

10 (a) The Illinois Freedom Trails Commission is established.
11 The purposes of the Commission are to explore, research, and
12 commemorate the journeys of freedom seekers and the sites and
13 landmarks in this State that became the networks of the
14 Underground Railroad.

15 (b) The Commission shall consist of a chairperson and 10

1 additional members appointed by the Governor. The membership
2 may include, but is not limited to, persons who are public
3 officials, scholars, and community-based activists who have
4 knowledge and interest in promoting the work of the
5 Commission. Members shall be broadly representative of the
6 State and the variety of groups interested in promoting the
7 work of the Commission.

8 (c) The terms of the members shall be 4 years. Members
9 shall serve until their successors are appointed and
10 qualified. Any vacancy in the membership of the Commission
11 shall be filled by the Governor for the unexpired term.
12 Members shall serve without compensation, but may be
13 reimbursed for reasonable expenses.

14 (d) Subject to appropriation, the Department shall provide
15 administrative and other support to the Commission.

16 (e) Subject to appropriation, the Commission shall hire a
17 full-time professional staff to implement Commission projects.

18 (f) At its first meeting and annually thereafter, the
19 Commission shall elect from among its members a chairperson
20 and other officers it considers necessary or appropriate.
21 After its first meeting, the Commission shall meet at the call
22 of the chairperson or if requested by 7 or more members.

23 (g) A majority of the members of the Commission constitute
24 a quorum for the transaction of business at a meeting of the
25 Commission. A majority of the members present and serving is
26 required for official action of the Commission.

1 (h) All business that the Commission is authorized to
2 perform shall be conducted at a public meeting of the
3 Commission, held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

4 (i) A writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of,
5 or retained by the Commission in the performance of an
6 official function is subject to the Freedom of Information
7 Act.

8 Section 15. Duties of Commission. The Commission shall
9 have the following duties:

10 (1) to provide resources for individuals and local
11 entities seeking to learn more about the Underground
12 Railroad in Illinois, including:

13 (A) an online resource website, including, but not
14 limited to maps of journeys, historical sites, and
15 conductor cemetery markers;

16 (B) a calendar of related events in this State;

17 (C) research sources and bibliographies;

18 (D) videos and links to videos; and

19 (E) pictures, brief histories, and other materials
20 developed locally and at the State level;

21 (2) collaborate with organizations focusing on the
22 Underground Railroad, including:

23 (A) local and regional Underground Railroad
24 groups;

25 (B) county and regional historical societies;

1 (C) museums, especially museums that focus on
2 slavery and the African American experience;

3 (D) academic programs, especially African American
4 Studies at the college level and history departments;
5 and

6 (E) organizations in African American communities;

7 (3) to create a grant funding program;

8 (4) to work with the National Park Service's Network
9 to Freedom program and serve as a liaison between the
10 National Park Service and local entities;

11 (5) to explore heritage tourism opportunities
12 connecting the locations of freedom seeker journeys and
13 Underground Railroad sites, working with the Illinois
14 Office of Tourism and regional tourism agencies; and

15 (6) to connect freedom seekers and Underground
16 Railroad stories to the range of freedom stories across
17 and throughout the history of Illinois.

18 Section 20. Online database and educational programs.

19 (a) The Commission shall create a publicly available
20 website that includes educational material concerning freedom
21 seekers' journeys on the portions of the Underground Railroad
22 in this State, including:

23 (1) an updated database of freedom seekers and their
24 journeys to and through Illinois;

25 (2) an updated map of the geography of the Underground

1 Railroad in Illinois; and

2 (3) a biographical dictionary of key persons
3 identified with the Underground Railroad in Illinois,
4 including freedom seekers, abolitionist allies, and
5 pro-slavery antagonists.

6 (b) The Commission, in collaboration with the State Board
7 of Education, shall develop and implement an educational
8 program to be made available to every public school in this
9 State. The educational program shall include instruction on:

10 (1) events of African American history, including the
11 African slave trade, slavery in the United States, and the
12 vestiges of slavery in this country;

13 (2) the journeys of freedom seekers and the
14 Underground Railroad in Illinois; and

15 (3) additional resources and activities to be used in
16 February as part of Black History Month.

17 (c) The Commission shall identify scholars in higher
18 education and community-based organizations to engage in
19 research and to be recruited into a speakers' bureau on the
20 Underground Railroad and anti-slavery activity in Illinois.

21 (d) The Commission shall support and publicize local
22 activities in this State that focus on the Underground
23 Railroad, including offering exhibits at meetings of
24 organizations open to spreading knowledge about abolitionism
25 and the Underground Railroad. The Commission shall focus on
26 supporting organizations in African American communities,

1 including assisting members of those communities undertake
2 research related to the history of their communities.

3 Section 25. Historic site and landmark recognition and
4 preservation.

5 (a) The Commission shall develop statewide guidelines for
6 the evaluation of freedom seeker journeys and Underground
7 Railroad sites and landmarks in the State. The Commission
8 shall use the guidelines to determine and maintain a list of
9 freedom seeker journeys and Underground Railroad sites and
10 landmarks and make the list available to the public. The
11 Commission shall include a contact person who represents the
12 site or landmark for each site or landmark included on the
13 list.

14 (b) The Commission shall develop standards and guidelines
15 for historic markers, signage, and other commemorative tools
16 and activities for sites and landmarks listed under subsection
17 (a). The Commission shall also assist sites and landmarks
18 listed under subsection (a) that are threatened with
19 demolition or deterioration.

20 (c) The Commission shall assist individuals and historic
21 preservation organizations in assessing freedom seeker
22 journeys and Underground Railroad sites and landmarks and
23 shall collaborate with the University of Illinois Extension
24 Master Gardener program, the Department, and other partners
25 concerning opportunities for the development of freedom seeker

1 journeys and Underground Railroad sites and landmarks.

2 Section 30. Grant program. Subject to appropriation, the
3 Commission may award grants for the following purposes:

4 (1) to research and identify freedom seeker journeys
5 and Underground Railroad sites and landmarks;

6 (2) to develop heritage tourism and promotional
7 activities on the Underground Railroad, including
8 exhibits, lectures, symposiums, and online materials; and

9 (3) to support an Underground Railroad cemetery marker
10 program.

11 Section 35. Annual report. The Commission shall submit a
12 report to the Governor and the General Assembly by July 1,
13 2026, and each year thereafter. The report shall include, at a
14 minimum, a description of the programs administered by the
15 Commission.

16 Section 40. Rulemaking. After consultation with and
17 written approval by the Department, the Commission may adopt
18 administrative rules as may be necessary to carry out the
19 provisions of this Act in accordance with the Illinois
20 Administrative Procedure Act.

21 Section 45. Repeal. This Act is repealed on January 1,
22 2037.

1 (20 ILCS 3405/22 rep.)

2 Section 90. The Historic Preservation Act is amended by
3 repealing Section 22.

4 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
5 becoming law.".