

By: Senator(s) Chassaniol, Fillingane,
Jordan, Jackson (11th), Barnett, Simmons
(13th), Thomas, Butler (36th), Norwood,
Horhn, Blackmon

To: Tourism; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2878

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM TRAIL COMMISSION TO
2 DEVELOP A PLAN TO PROMOTE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM TRAIL LOCATIONS AND
3 HISTORY FOR PURPOSES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; TO PRESCRIBE THE
4 FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION; TO EMPOWER THE COMMISSION
5 TO ACCEPT AND EXPEND GRANT FUNDS; TO PROVIDE FOR INTERDEPARTMENTAL
6 COOPERATION; TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMISSION TO PURCHASE AND ERECT
7 "MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM TRAIL" HISTORICAL MARKERS WITH THE ASSISTANCE
8 OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION; AND FOR RELATED
9 PURPOSES.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

11 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby created the Mississippi
12 Freedom Trail Commission, hereinafter referred to as the
13 "commission," to be in existence for the period from July 1, 2022,
14 to July 1, 2026. The commission may accept and expend grants and
15 private donations from any source, including federal, state,
16 public and private entities, to assist it to carry out its
17 functions.

18 (2) For purposes of this section, the term "movement" shall
19 mean the American Civil Rights Movement.

20 (3) The powers, functions and duties of the commission shall
21 include, but not be limited to, the following:



22 (a) To study, deliberate and report to the Governor and
23 the Legislature on or before January 1, 2023, on the best method
24 to market and promote the Freedom Trail, to include tourism,
25 academic study and historic archives, historic preservation,
26 cultural education and the support of veterans of the movement.
27 Such marketing shall be designed to attract tourists, conferences,
28 filmmakers and others for the purpose of economic development of
29 all geographic areas of the state through the promotion of the
30 stories and sites of the movement and the historic context for the
31 movement, and to analyze the tourism potential of the Freedom
32 Trail for Mississippi.

33 (b) To make an inventory of "assets" that make up the
34 movement history that could be developed into Freedom Trail sites
35 for domestic and international tourism, and opportunities for
36 investment.

37 (c) To establish a statewide Mississippi Freedom Trail
38 infrastructure to offer to tourists and targeted groups a
39 structured tour of Mississippi historic sites.

40 (d) To coordinate with Visit Mississippi and the
41 Mississippi Development Authority, the Mississippi Civil Rights
42 Museum and the Department of Archives and History, the Department
43 of Transportation, the Mississippi Educational Television
44 Authority, the State Institutions of Higher Learning, the Center
45 for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of
46 Mississippi, the University Center for Economic Development at



47 Mississippi Valley State University, the Delta Center for Culture
48 and Learning at Delta State University, and similar organizations
49 for sharing resources and information in order to ensure a
50 comprehensive approach to marketing the Freedom Trail and the
51 history of the movement in Mississippi.

52 (e) To coordinate the Freedom Trail marketing plan with
53 any existing state historic preservation programs, in order to:

54 (i) Identify and preserve historic properties and
55 sites of the movement;

56 (ii) Determine the eligibility of properties and
57 sites for listing on the National Register;

58 (iii) Prepare nominations of properties and sites
59 for inclusion on the National Register;

60 (iv) Maintenance of historical and archaeological
61 databases; and

62 (v) Evaluation of properties and sites for
63 eligibility for state and federal preservation incentives.

64 (4) The commission shall be composed of the following
65 members:

66 (a) The Director of the Division of Tourism of the
67 Mississippi Development Authority or his designee;

68 (b) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
69 Department of Archives and History or his designee;

70 (c) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Arts
71 Commission or his designee;



72 (d) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
73 Educational Television Authority or his designee;

74 (e) The Director of the Center for the Study of
75 Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi;

76 (f) A person designated by the President of Mississippi
77 Valley State University;

78 (g) The Director of the Delta Center for Culture and
79 Learning at Delta State University;

80 (h) The Director of the Mississippi Civil Rights
81 Museum;

82 (i) Two (2) members of the Mississippi Senate
83 designated by the Lieutenant Governor, who shall serve on a
84 nonvoting basis;

85 (j) Two (2) members of the Mississippi House of
86 Representatives designated by the Speaker of the House, who shall
87 serve on a nonvoting basis;

88 (k) Two (2) members appointed by the Governor, who
89 shall have experience in cultural affairs or tourism development
90 in Mississippi; and

91 (l) Four (4) members appointed by the Governor from the
92 state at large, who shall have demonstrated a commitment to
93 furthering the stories of the movement in Mississippi.

94 (5) The Governor shall designate one (1) commission member
95 to serve as chairman for a term concurrent with that of the
96 Governor. The commission shall meet upon the call of the chairman



97 not later than August 1, 2022, and shall organize for business by
98 adopting internal organizational procedures necessary for
99 efficient operation of the commission, including officers, quorum
100 requirements and policies for any commission staff. Each member
101 of the commission shall designate necessary staff of his
102 respective agency, department, university or business entity, as
103 the case may be, to provide administrative support to assist the
104 commission in performing its duties and responsibilities. The
105 commission shall meet and conduct business at least quarterly.
106 Meetings of the commission shall be open to the public, and
107 opportunity for public comment shall be made available.

108 (6) Members of the commission shall receive no compensation
109 for their services.

110 (7) The commission shall submit a report, including any
111 proposed legislation, to the Governor and to the Legislature
112 before the convening of the 2023 Regular Session. The report
113 shall include a comprehensive state plan for marketing the Freedom
114 Trail as specifically provided above.

115 (8) All departments, boards, agencies, officers and
116 institutions of the state and all subdivisions thereof shall
117 cooperate with the commission in carrying out its purposes under
118 this section.

119 (9) (a) Any funds or donations received by the commission
120 shall be deposited into a special fund which is hereby created in
121 the State Treasury. The fund shall be maintained by the State



122 Treasurer as a special fund, separate and apart from the State
123 General Fund. Unexpended amounts remaining in the special fund at
124 the end of a fiscal year shall not lapse into the General Fund,
125 and any interest earned or investment earnings on amounts in the
126 fund shall be deposited to the credit of the special fund.

127 (b) Monies in the fund shall be expended by the
128 Department of Finance and Administration after receipt of
129 requisitions submitted by the appropriate person designated by the
130 commission. Monies in the special fund may be used by the
131 commission in carrying out its responsibilities under this
132 section.

133 (10) The commission shall designate specific sites for
134 erection of appropriate "Mississippi Freedom Trail" markers to
135 offer to tourists and targeted groups a structured tour of Civil
136 Rights Movement historical sites. The commission shall be
137 authorized to purchase appropriate Mississippi Freedom Trail
138 markers from any of its available funds. The texts for the
139 Mississippi Freedom Trail markers shall be approved by the
140 commission. The Mississippi Department of Transportation shall
141 cooperate with the commission by erecting and maintaining the
142 markers that have been approved by the commission.

143 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
144 and after July 1, 2022.

