

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 111

BY SENATOR DORSEY-COLOMB

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of the Attorney General, and Louisiana Cemetery Board to take all appropriate action and work in conjunction as necessary to provide information identifying persons interred in Gilbert Memorial Park.

WHEREAS, Gilbert Memorial Park is a cemetery located on Greenwell Springs Road in Baton Rouge that served the North Baton Rouge community since the early twentieth century under the Baranco family through the 1980s; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana law requires the keeping of interment records and accurate maps of interments for all operating cemeteries in the state under R.S. 8:662 and 314; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Cemetery Board and the attorney general have undertaken an investigation of Gilbert Memorial Park from 2007 through 2012 which has identified incomplete interment records for the cemetery from at least 1990 through the present; and

WHEREAS, the investigation led directly to the removal of Mr. Lymus Washington as the operator of Gilbert Memorial Park by injunction in 2012 and the institution of a receivership for the cemetery by court order under the direction of People Achieving Community Empowerment, Inc., in 2013, to administer, manage, and oversee all affairs of the cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the lack of records kept by Mr. Washington during his tenure as the operator of Gilbert Memorial Park has left many descendants with no information regarding the final resting place of their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, the final resting places of anyone interred in Louisiana is required, under R.S. 40:52 and La. Admin Code. tit. 48, pt. V, §12311, to be recorded on a burial transit permit which is lodged and filed with the Vital Records Registry of the Office of Public Health of the Department of Health and Hospitals; and

WHEREAS, many Louisiana death certificates, under R.S. 40:49 and La. Admin

Code. tit. 48, pt. V, §12307, issued by the Vital Records Registry of the Office of Public Health of the Department of Health and Hospitals indicate the final resting place of the deceased; and

WHEREAS, a compilation of such documents which indicate that Gilbert Memorial Park is the final resting place of individuals will provide some measure of closure to many descendants of those buried in that cemetery; and

WHEREAS, a compilation of such information will assist the receiver and any subsequent operator of Gilbert Memorial Park in reconstructing the records of the cemetery; and

WHEREAS, for these reasons it is necessary and appropriate that the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of the Attorney General, and Louisiana Cemetery Board take all appropriate actions and work in conjunction as necessary to provide information identifying persons interred in Gilbert Memorial Park.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Health and Hospitals to assist the attorney general, the board, and any subsequent owner of the cemetery in compiling information appropriate and necessary in reconstructing the records of the cemetery.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health and Hospitals shall also transmit information as appropriate to the Office of the Attorney General for the purpose of determining whether further action by the attorney general is warranted regarding Gilbert Memorial Park.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of the Attorney General, Louisiana Cemetery Board, and the state-appointed receiver managing Gilbert Memorial Park shall work in conjunction to determine the most appropriate and readily available means, including public service announcements and other communications, to make information available to families and loved ones regarding persons determined to be interred in Gilbert Memorial Park.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in order to facilitate and ensure maximum community involvement and public participation in such communications, the department, Cemetery Board, and attorney general shall consult on a regular basis and seek the advice

of a board, to be known as the Lillian Jackson Memorial Board, composed of the following persons who shall serve without compensation or reimbursement for expenses:

(1) A member of the Senate who represents the area which encompasses Gilbert Memorial Park, or his designee.

(2) A member of the House of Representatives who represents the area which encompasses Gilbert Memorial Park, or his designee.

(3) The East Baton Rouge Parish mayor-president, or his designee.

(4) A member of the East Baton Rouge Metropolitan Council who represents the area which encompasses Gilbert Memorial Park, or his designee.

(5) One member of the clergy appointed by a majority vote of the board members provided in (1) through (4) herein.

(6) One family member of a loved one buried in Gilbert Memorial Park appointed by a majority vote of the board members provided in (1) through (4) herein.

(7) One at-large member to be elected by a majority vote of the board members provided in (1) through (6) from a list of individuals nominated by the board members provided in (1) through (4) herein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of the Attorney General, Louisiana Cemetery Board, and the state-appointed receiver managing Gilbert Memorial Park are hereby urged and requested, in consultation with the Lillian Jackson Memorial Board, to take all appropriate action on behalf of the state to recognize, honor, and commemorate those interred in Gilbert Memorial Park, including the acceptance of donations from any source in the form of money, materials, labor, and maintenance for the purpose of erecting a commemorative marker in Gilbert Memorial Park.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Health and Hospitals, the attorney general, and the director of the Louisiana Cemetery Board.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES