



July 20, 2020

The Honorable Charlie Geren  
Chairman  
House Committee on Administration  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

The Honorable Bryan Hughes  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Administration  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

**RE: MEMORIALS ON THE TEXAS CAPITOL GROUNDS**

Chairman Geren and Chairman Hughes:

Over the past few months, the world has joined forces to fight a deadly pandemic, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). In just five months, the virus has infected over eight million individuals and killed nearly 120,000 Americans. However, recently a far more deadly epidemic has captured the attention of the global community. Unlike the coronavirus, this ailment is not new; this illness has plagued the United States since its inception—racism.

The back-to-back killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd sparked protests across our country, including some reaching the tens of thousands here in Texas. As a result of the senseless murders of these African-Americans, conversations have begun regarding criminal justice reform, law enforcement priorities, issues related to race relations, and the age-old debate related to Confederate monuments and memorials.

In just the past few weeks, city, state, and national officials have removed Confederate symbols from public display. Here in Texas, there are more than 180 public symbols of the Confederacy and other mementos that represent pain and divisiveness to so many in our communities. As we continue to work on solutions to address systemic racism, we request the House and Senate Committees on Administration to work alongside the State Preservation Board to take the necessary steps to call for the removal of the following memorials from the Texas Capitol grounds:

- Albert Sidney Johnston Portrait (Senate Chamber)
  - Kentucky-born Confederate General
- Cannons (South Entrance & South Grounds)
  - Field artillery used by the Confederates during the Civil War
- Confederate Soldiers' Monument (South Grounds)
  - Five bronze figures memorializing the Confederate Army
- Dick Dowling Portrait (House Chamber)
  - Irish-born Confederate Officer

- Hood's Texas Brigade Monument (East Grounds)
  - Includes the Confederate flag carved into the monument; accompanied by quotes by Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Confederate General Robert E. Lee
- Jefferson Davis Portrait (Senate Chamber)
  - President of Confederacy
- Terry's Texas Rangers Monument (South Grounds)
  - Volunteers in the Confederate Army led by plantation owner Benjamin Terry

In addition, we request the renaming of the John H. Reagan State Office Building. Tennessee-born John Henninger Reagan served in the cabinet of Confederate President Jefferson Davis as Postmaster General and subsequently Secretary of the Treasury. Reagan was a staunch supporter of slavery, and argued the following during a congressional debate on February 29, 1860:

"They do not recognize and consider in their speeches the fact that there are four million of these negroes; that they are incapable of self-government; and that to invest them with freedom would necessarily lead to the extermination of the greater part of them for the safety of society and the preservation of real, intelligent, regulated liberty to the people of fifteen States of the Union; and the relapsing of the remainder of them into the condition of degradation, suffering, and want, in which the free negroes of the free States, and of the West Indies, are not wearing out their miserable existence, in a hopeless competition with a superior race in the one, and for the want of intelligence to direct and control them in the other. Nor do they consider the fact that these four million negroes represent, in the hands of their owners two thousand million dollars; which, in itself, is a valuable investment of capital, and in their opinion, improving and elevating the negro morally, intellectually and physically, and adding to the prosperity and happiness of the white race."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, realizing that the aforementioned memorial list is non-exhaustive, we ask that a working group is formed to conduct a thorough review of the artistic, social, and historical intent and significance of all honorific memorials and symbols on the Capitol grounds. This group should contain an equal bipartisan balance from both chambers, appointed by the Speaker, Lieutenant Governor, and minority caucus leaders from the House and Senate. Upon their conclusion, the working group will submit recommendations to the State Preservation Board.

As legislators, we are uniquely positioned to make decisions that impact the lives of so many. And today, we find ourselves at a crossroads—will we situate ourselves on the right side of history by removing these symbols of hostility, or will we continue to side with "tradition" and ignore the ills of our past? We, the undersigned, unequivocally move to adopt the former.

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<sup>1</sup> "A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774 - 1875". memory.loc.gov. Retrieved July 15, 2020.

Sincerely,



Rep. Rafael Anchía  
House Committee on Administration



Rep. Donna Howard  
House Committee on Administration



Sen. Nathan Johnson  
Senate Committee on Administration



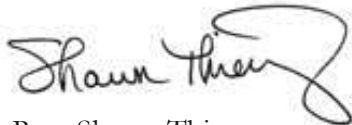
Sen. Jose Menéndez  
Senate Committee on Administration



Rep. Lina Ortega  
House Committee on Administration



Rep. Carl Sherman  
House Committee on Administration



Rep. Shawn Thierry  
House Committee on Administration



Sen. Judith Zaffirini  
Senate Committee on Administration

CC: The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor and Chairman State Preservation Board  
The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor and Vice-Chairman State Preservation Board  
The Honorable Dennis Bonnen, Speaker of the House and Vice Chairman State Preservation Board  
Ms. Alethea Swann Bugg, Citizen Board Member State Preservation Board