



# **BORRIS L. MILES**

## **STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 13**

COMMITTEES: Criminal Justice, Health and Human Services, Natural Resources and Economic Development and Nominations

### **OFFICIAL STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Statement by Senator Borris L. Miles on SB 1663**

Senate Bill 1663 is a disgraceful and divisive bill that seeks to add unnecessary obstacles and restrictions to remove or alter statues, monuments, street names and other types of public spaces.

Certain events in our history do not deserve the distinction of having a statue erect in its honor. I refuse to memorialize slavery or the Confederacy. To the African American community, these pieces of history represent painful symbols of slavery and oppression.

During the floor debate, I questioned the author of SB 1663 on several issues I had with his legislation. I reminded him that there was a time when I would not have been able to challenge him in a debate, as I was doing that afternoon, without the fear of severe retaliation, arrest, imprisonment or worse. I respectfully asked the author to consider the pain and heartache that my brothers and sisters of color, on the Senate floor, experience as it relates to Texas history.

I asked the author if he knew the individuals who had the honor of having their portrait hung in the Senate Chamber. I inquired if individuals like Confederate figures, Jefferson Davis and Albert Sydney Johnston and others represented the historical significance of yesterday or today. I wanted to know if they were worthy to receive such a prestigious honor.

My impassioned plea struck a chord with my fellow senators, as I unanimously passed two amendments regarding Confederate memorials at the Capitol. One amendment would create an advisory committee to review artwork in the Senate Chamber and the other would reinstate the Historical Representation Advisory Commission that was abolished in 2007, to evaluate the historical significance of monuments installed on the Capitol grounds.

It is sad that in 2019, we still have to remind folks of our state's tragic history. During an exchange with a Republican senator who shared what he told his children of Texas' past, I asked him what should I tell mine. During my freshman year in the Texas Legislature, my son, who was eight at the time, walked in the Capitol and saw a portrait of African American men hanging from a tree with two white sheriffs watching. Underneath the picture, it read, "Doing God's Work." African Americans should not have to explain why slavery or its depictions is wrong.

I voted against SB 1663, a divisive and disgraceful bill that should have never come up for debate in our chamber. This bill will now move to the Texas House for further consideration.

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