

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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HOUSE DRH60147-LBz-227 (03/06)

Short Title: 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Acknowledgment. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Wright.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO ACKNOWLEDGE AS RECOMMENDED BY THE 1898
3 WILMINGTON RACE RIOT COMMISSION THAT THE VIOLENCE OF THE
4 1898 WILMINGTON RACE RIOT WAS A CONSPIRACY THAT USED
5 INTIMIDATION AND FORCE TO REPLACE A DULY ELECTED LOCAL
6 GOVERNMENT.

7 Whereas, public knowledge and historical memory of the 1898 Wilmington
8 Race Riot was obscure until the North Carolina General Assembly, led by
9 Representative Thomas E. Wright and the late Senator Luther Jordan, established the
10 Wilmington Race Riot Commission ("Commission") in 2000 to develop a historical
11 record of the event and to assess the economic impact of the riot on African Americans
12 in Wilmington and across the Eastern region and the State; and

13 Whereas, the Commission, chaired by Representative Wright and Senator
14 Julia Boseman, both of Wilmington, oversaw a formal investigation of the events of
15 1898 and approved a 464-page report, detailing the history of the riot and the events that
16 precipitated it; and

17 Whereas, the Commission's report concluded that political leaders and other
18 members of a white elite were directly responsible for and participants in the violence of
19 November 17, 1898; engineering and executing a statewide white supremacy campaign
20 in order to win the 1900 elections that was vicious, polarizing, and defamatory toward
21 African-Americans and that encouraged racial violence; and

22 Whereas, the effects of that campaign and the Wilmington Riots lasted far
23 beyond 1898, paving the way for legislation that disenfranchised African-American and
24 poor white citizens, for lynching and violence against African-American citizens, and
25 for Jim Crow segregation until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s; and

26 Whereas, the State of North Carolina embraces the Commission's report as a
27 chronicle of an important part of State history, but it is saddened by the full extent of

1 leaders' involvement in the Wilmington Riot of 1898 as these deplorable actions
2 contradict the spirit of a modern State; Now, therefore,
3 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

4 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly of North Carolina, on behalf of the
5 people of North Carolina, acknowledges that the violence of 1898 in Wilmington was a
6 conspiracy of a white elite that used intimidation and force to replace a duly elected
7 local government, that people lost livelihoods and were banished from their homes
8 without due process of law, and that government at all levels failed to protect its
9 citizens.

10 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.