

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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HOUSE BILL 751

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

Sponsors: Representatives Wright, Jones (Primary Sponsors); and Parmon.

Referred to: Judiciary II.

March 15, 2007

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
28 leaders' involvement in the Wilmington Riot of 1898 as these deplorable actions
29 contradict the spirit of a modern State; Now, therefore,

1 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

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