ENGROSSED SENATE
BILL NO. 659

By: Eason McIntyre and Adelson of the Senate

and

Ellis of the House

[Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Corridor - codification - effective date]

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 7.1 of Title 53, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. There is hereby created within the Oklahoma Historical Society the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Corridor.

B. The purpose of the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Corridor is to encourage the development and appreciation of historic sites, museums, and heritage programs associated with the story of the Buffalo Soldiers and their legacy of patriotic service, sacrifice, and struggle for the fundamental rights and responsibilities of every American citizen.

C. Furthermore, the Corridor is to encourage heritage tourism that will attract visitors to Oklahoma and lead them to communities where the stories of the Buffalo Soldiers and their legacy are still evident today.

SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 7.2 of Title 53, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. The Corridor shall be a cooperative program administered by the Oklahoma Historical Society to focus resources on the shared theme of Buffalo Soldiers within a fixed geographical area.

B. The Corridor shall be a private-public partnership between federal, state, county, municipal, tribal, nonprofit organizations, and private individuals who share the responsibility for preserving and promoting the story of the Buffalo Soldiers.

C. All participating communities and organizations shall share a common heritage of the African-American soldiers who served their country in the military and contributed to the development of farms and ranches owned by the Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes, the All-Black Towns of Oklahoma, and the Greenwood District of Tulsa.

D. The Corridor, as administered by the Historical Society, shall encompass the following communities and sites: Tulsa, Cabin Creek, Fort Gibson, Honey Springs Battlefield, Muskogee, Rentiesville, Taft, Grayson, Clearview, and Boley. Others along the corridor will be encouraged to participate in the program.

E. The partners in the Corridor, subject to funding, shall participate in events, programs, signage, and interpretive markers administered by the Oklahoma Historical Society.

F. The partners in the Corridor, subject to funding, shall participate in promotional brochures and regional, national, and international marketing efforts administered by the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department.

SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 7.3 of Title 53, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. There is hereby created the "Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Corridor Advisory Committee". The Committee shall consist of five (5) members as follows:

1. The Executive Director of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department or designee;

2. The Executive Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society or designee; and

3. The Governor shall appoint three members, one of whom shall be from the Greenwood Cultural District, one of whom shall be from the All-Black Towns, and one of whom shall be from the public at large.

B. The Advisory Committee shall contribute input to the development of a master plan for the Corridor, offer guidance to professional staff as programs are developed, and seek additional partners and resources for the cooperative effort.

C. The Advisory Committee members' terms shall be for three (3) years.

D. Each member of the Advisory Committee shall serve without compensation except that each member of the Committee shall receive reimbursement for travel expenses in accordance with the State Travel Reimbursement Act.

E. Staffing for the Corridor and Advisory Committee shall be provided by the Oklahoma Historical Society.

SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 7.4 of Title 53, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund for the Oklahoma Historical Society to be designated the "Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Corridor Fund". The fund shall be a continuing fund, not subject to fiscal year limitations and shall consist of all monies deposited to the fund by law, as well as gifts, donations, and private, state, and federal funds designated for the deposit thereto.

B. All monies accruing to the credit of such fund are hereby appropriated and may be budgeted and expended by the Oklahoma Historical Society for the purpose of providing for the programs and direct costs of the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Corridor.

C. Expenditures from such fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the State Treasurer against claims filed as prescribed by

law with the Director of the Office of State Finance for approval and payment.

SECTION 5. This act shall become effective November 1, 2005.

Passed the Senate the 3rd of March, 2005.

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Presiding Officer of the Senate

Passed the House of Representatives the ____ day of _____, 2005.

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Presiding Officer of the House
of Representatives