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Burial law amendment creates equal protection for Native Americans

On April 30, Governor Bob Riley signed into law an amendment to Alabama's burial law that provides equal protection for Native American burials. Under the amended law, Native American burials and funerary objects are now protected to the same extent as those of all other ethnic groups. The law makes it illegal to willfully or maliciously disturb any grave, monument, or burial site. A violation of the law could result in a Class C felony conviction, punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a fine of \$15,000.

Prior to the passing of this amendment, the law exempted property owners who knowingly disturbed Native American burials or funerary objects located on their property. The amendment removes this exemption.

The law still allows for professional research at burial sites. Any person or company conducting the research must first obtain a permit from the Alabama Historical Commission.

The Senate and House passed the bill unanimously. The passage was a result of the efforts of Senator Wendell Mitchell, the Alabama Indian Affairs Commission, Alabama Historical Commission, Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance, Alabama Department of Transportation, and the University of Alabama's Office of Archaeological Research.

To view the full text of the bill, visit: www.preserveala.org/currentissues.aspx.

*To protect, preserve, and interpret Alabama's historic places is the mission of the **Alabama Historical Commission**, the **State Historic Preservation Office**.*

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