

Georgia Senate Votes to Erect Statue of Martin Luther King Jr.

The Georgia Senate voted Wednesday to allow the first monument to the late civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner **Martin Luther King Jr.** on the state Capitol grounds.

A portrait of King, who was born just a few blocks away, hangs inside the Capitol building, but there is no other monument to him in or around the site.

The bill, which will now go back to the Georgia House of Representatives, requires that private funds pay for the monument.

During a celebration of King's birthday in January, Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, a Republican, pledged to work with state lawmakers to erect a fitting monument to King.

Members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which King helped found, are backing the measure and say it is overdue in his hometown.

Late last year, a statue of U.S. Senator Thomas Watson, who died in 1922 and was known for his racist, anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic views, was moved from the Georgia Capitol grounds to a less prominent park across the street.

Under the Georgia legislation, the King statue would be erected "as soon as practicable" once private funds have been raised and any necessary licensing rights have been obtained from the King estate.

King, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn., in 1968.

Editing by Leslie Adler

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