

1 **State of Arkansas**
2 **78th General Assembly**
3 **Regular Session, 1991**
4 **By: Representative Doug Wood**

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1479

For An Act To Be Entitled

8 "AN ACT TO PROHIBIT THE DESECRATION OF HUMAN SKELETAL
9 BURIAL REMAINS IN UNREGISTERED CEMETERIES; TO PROHIBIT
10 TRADE OR COMMERCIAL DISPLAY OF HUMAN SKELETAL BURIAL
11 REMAINS OR ASSOCIATED BURIAL FURNITURE; AND FOR OTHER
12 PURPOSES."

13
14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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16 WHEREAS, the state and its citizens have an obligation to protect from
17 desecration all human skeletal burial remains and associated burial furniture
18 including those from unmarked, unrecorded, abandoned, or unregistered graves,
19 burial grounds, or cemeteries; and

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21 WHEREAS, the skeletal burial remains and associated burial furniture of
22 many *Native Americans*, Europeans, Blacks, American settlers, and others were
23 placed in burial grounds not presently known, recorded, or registered;

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25 NOW THEREFORE,

26 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

27

28 SECTION 1. As used in this act:

29 (1) "Artifacts" means arrowheads, other bone and stone tools, pottery,
30 pottery fragments, china, metal objects or other material objects made by
31 *Native American* settlers, or other residents of Arkansas, which were left or
32 lost in or on the ground, except those items which were placed in direct
33 association with human skeletal burial remains or burial furniture as defined
34 in this act.

35 (2) "Burial furniture" means any items which were placed with human

1 remains at the time of burial or in apparent intentional association with the
2 burial and would include burial markers, items of personal adornment, casket
3 and casket hardware, stone and bone tools, pottery vessels, or other similar
4 objects or materials.

5 (3) "Burial grounds" means any place where human skeletal remains are
6 or have been buried.

7 (4) "Desecration" means the intentional, willful, and/or knowing
8 removal or disturbance of human skeletal burial remains or burial furniture
9 which was placed with a buried human body and/or treating such human skeletal
10 burial remains in an irreverent and contemptuous manner.

11 (5) "Human skeletal burial remains" means the calcified portion of a
12 human body which remains after the flesh has decomposed.

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14 SECTION 2. The mere possession of items described in Section 1 of this
15 act does not create a presumption of a violation of this act, but the duty
16 shall remain upon the state to prove any violation of this act.

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18 SECTION 3. Legislative Intent. It is a declaration and statement of
19 legislative intent that all human burials and human skeletal burial remains
20 shall be accorded equal treatment and respect for human dignity without
21 reference to their ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds, religious
22 affiliations, or date of burial. The provisions of this act shall apply to
23 all human burials or human skeletal burial remains found on or in all public
24 or private lands or waters of Arkansas.

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26 SECTION 4. Anyone who knowingly buys, sells, or barter human skeletal
27 burial remains or their associated burial furniture is committing a Class A
28 misdemeanor for the first offense and a Class D felony on the second and
29 subsequent offenses.

30 Artifacts as defined in this act *and private collections legally acquired*
31 *prior to the effective date of this act* are exempted from this section.

32 Nothing in this act prohibits the collecting of such artifacts by landowners
33 or others who do so with the landowner's permission.

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35 SECTION 5. Anyone who knowingly displays human skeletal burial remains
36 for profit or to aid and abet a commercial enterprise is committing a Class B

1 misdemeanor with each day of display being a separate offense.

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3 SECTION 6. Anyone who intentionally or knowingly desecrates or permits
4 desecration of a burial ground and associated burial furniture is committing
5 on the first offense a Class A misdemeanor and on the second or subsequent
6 offenses, a Class D felony. The presence in the ground of grave markers,
7 *caskets or casket hardware creates a rebuttable presumption that these are*
8 *burial furniture and of the existence or presence of a human burial ground.*
9 Exempted from this section of the act is disturbance of human skeletal burial
10 remains or burial furniture by landowners or *agricultural tenants* as a
11 consequence of agricultural activity.

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13 SECTION 7. The public has a right to the knowledge to be derived and
14 gained from the scientific study of human skeletal burial remains and burial
15 furniture. Therefore, when justified by "A State Plan for the Conservation of
16 Archeological Resources in Arkansas" as promulgated by the State Archeologist
17 *and the State Historic Preservation Officer*, the investigation, excavation,
18 removal, and analysis of human skeletal burial remains and burial furniture is
19 authorized, and if done must be carried out with the consent of the landowner
20 *and consultation with the appropriate tribe, if identifiable*, and under the
21 direction of archaeologists employed by the state or *the U. S. government or*
22 *by archeologists meeting the U.S. Department of Interior's professional*
23 *qualifications standards found in the current Code of Federal Regulations.*

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25 SECTION 8. If, subsequent to the date of this act, human skeletal
26 burial remains are exhumed for relocation, then at the request of a direct
27 descendant, or that of a specific church, or that of a *Native American* tribal
28 group recognized by the U. S. government who can provide written or scientific
29 documentation of such descent, or of direct church or tribal affiliation with
30 the human skeletal burial remains, the human skeletal burial remains will be
31 *conveyed to such an individual or entity. By consultation with the*
32 *aforementioned groups, scientific studies may be undertaken.*

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34 SECTION 9. If human skeletal burial remains are not claimed as set
35 forth in Section 8, the Arkansas Archeological Survey or a state supported

1 museum or a museum accredited by the American Association of Museums may serve
2 as a depository for such skeletal remains as are required for scientific
3 purposes. If not otherwise claimed as provided herein, skeletal burial
4 remains shall be disposed of in accordance with existing laws, rules, and
5 regulations for disposing of human remains.

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7 SECTION 10. All provisions of this act of a general and permanent
8 nature are amendatory to the Arkansas Code of 1987 Annotated and the Arkansas
9 Code Revision Commission shall incorporate the same in the Code.

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11 SECTION 11. If any provision of this act or the application thereof to
12 any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect
13 other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without
14 the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this
15 act are declared to be severable.

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17 SECTION 12. All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this act are
18 hereby repealed.

19 */s/ Doug Wood*

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