

**Public Assemblages Act for the Separation of Races, 1926  
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# The Southern Workman

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## EDITORIALS

### **The Massenburg Bill**

As a matter of record the Southern Workman prints in this issue the text of the Massenburg Bill passed by the General Assembly of Virginia in its 1926 session. The bill was evidently directed against Hampton Institute because of its continued observance of the custom, followed since the founding of the school, of seating all persons attending entertainments at the Institute without discrimination because of color. It was introduced into the Assembly through the efforts of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of Newport News and Hampton; and became law without the Governor's signature after the adjournment of the session. It was opposed by several of the leading white newspapers of the State; by the Richmond Chamber of Commerce; by the State Interracial Committee; and by other prominent white citizens of Virginia. It will go into effect about June 10. The text follows:—

“Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia that it shall be the duty of any person, persons, firm, institution, or corporation, operating, maintaining, keeping, conducting,

*Citation: "The Massenburg Bill," Southern Workman, 55 (June 1926): 242-243, Library of Virginia*

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sponsoring, or permitting any public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show, or any place of public entertainment or public assemblage, which is attended by both white and colored persons, to separate the white race and the colored race and to set apart and designate in each such public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show, or place of public entertainment, or public assemblage, certain seats therein to be occupied by white persons, and a portion thereof, or certain seats therein, to be occupied by colored persons; and any such person, persons, firm, institution, or corporation that shall fail, refuse, or neglect to comply with the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not less than \$100 and not more than \$500 for each offense.

"All persons who fail while in any public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show, or any place of public entertainment or public assemblage to take and occupy the seats or other space assigned to them in pursuance of the provisions of this act by the manager, usher, or other person in charge of such public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show, or any place of public entertainment or public assemblage, or whose duty is to take up tickets or collect the admission from the guests therein, or who shall fail to obey the request of such manager, usher, or other person, as aforesaid, to change their seats from time to time as occasion requires in order that this act may be complied with, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not less than \$10 nor more than \$25 for each offense. Furthermore such person may be ejected from such public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show, or other place of public entertainment or public assemblage, by the manager, usher, or ticket taker, or other person in charge of such public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show, or any place of public entertainment or public assemblage, or by any police officer or any other conservator of the peace; and if such person ejected shall have paid admission into said public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show, or other place of public entertainment or public assemblage, he shall not be entitled to a return of any part of the same."

The Hampton Board of Trustees at its annual meeting in April decided that in order to conform to the law it would be necessary to conduct hereafter all gatherings for entertainment or instruction as private meetings, open only to members of the school community and to invited guests.

Citation: "The Massenburg Bill," *Southern Workman*, 55 (June 1926): 242-243, Library of Virginia