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Leader Driskell's Abandoned Cemeteries Bill Signed Into Law

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - [House Bill 49 - Abandoned and Historic Cemeteries](#), by Florida House Democratic **Leader Fentrice Driskell (D-Tampa)**, has been signed into law. For the past four years, **Leader Driskell** has led an effort to pass legislation to create a pathway for the state to assist communities when abandoned, lost, or stolen African American cemeteries are rediscovered. Several such cemeteries, like the Zion Cemetery in Robles Park, are located throughout Tampa Bay.

The new law incorporates several recommendations proposed by the Abandoned African American Cemeteries Task Force, which **Leader Driskell** helped create through prior legislation, into the state's legal framework. Specifically, the law establishes the Historic Cemeteries Program and the Historic Cemeteries Program Advisory Council within the Department of State's Division of Historical Resources. These initiatives will support and facilitate education about and the maintenance of abandoned and historic cemeteries. Additionally, the law includes a \$1 million appropriation for conducting research on abandoned cemeteries and providing grants for the repair, restoration, or maintenance of African American cemeteries. **HB 49** passed unanimously with more than 30 bipartisan co-sponsors.

Leader Driskell is grateful that her work will help many Floridians to honor their ancestors and loved ones with the humanity and respect they've always deserved.

"I am thrilled to announce that HB 49 has been signed into law," she said. "I am grateful for the support of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to help get this bill to the Governor's desk. I would like to express my appreciation to former **Senator Arthenia Joyner**, former **Senator Janet Cruz**, and my co-sponsor, **Senator Bobby Powell** for their collaboration and hard work throughout this journey. I also extend my gratitude to the Abandoned African American Cemeteries Task Force and all stakeholders involved in turning this vision into reality. My commitment remains steadfast in ensuring that every Floridian has the freedom to be healthy, prosperous, and safe. The signing of this bill into law brings us one step closer to achieving that goal."

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