



National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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KAN. GOVERNOR SIGNS BILL ON BROWN V. BOARD MURAL

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Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson signs a bill directing the state to commemorate the U.S. Supreme Court's historic 1954 decision declaring school segregation unconstitutional with a mural at the Statehouse, as legislators and NAACP members watch, Monday, May 17, 2010, in Topeka, Kan. (AP Photo/John Hanna)



JOHN HANNA, Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) -- The historic U.S. Supreme Court ruling declaring school segregation unconstitutional will be commemorated with a mural at the Kansas Statehouse under a bill Gov. Mark Parkinson signed Monday.

Parkinson had the signing ceremony on the 56th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, named for a lawsuit challenging school segregation in Topeka.

Several legislators and officials with state and local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People stood behind Parkinson as he signed the bill.

"It will sort of put Kansas in its historical place, where it should be, but give the citizens of this country and particularly Kansas an opportunity to celebrate and just reflect on what Brown versus Board has done for the country," said Katrina Robertson, a 41-year-old Merriam attorney and president of the NAACP's Johnson County branch.

The new law, which takes effect July 1, sets up a 12-member commission to draft a plan for a mural. The mural's creation and installation would be paid for with private money.

After the mural is in place, the commission will make decisions about future Statehouse renovations.

"This is one of the really fun days to be governor, because we're able to do something that's terrific for the Capitol," Parkinson said. "We're able to recognize the great history that we have in the state, and we're able to do it without spending state money, which is nice."

The Statehouse is already home to well-known murals by John Stuart Curry, most notably one outside the governor's office depicting abolitionist John Brown.

A decade ago, another law directed state officials to create a mural honoring the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteers, the first unit of black troops to see battle during the Civil War. That project has been delayed by the ongoing renovation of the Statehouse, which is supposed to be completed in 2012. Topeka also is home to a national historic site dedicated to the Brown decision and the legal fight to end segregation. The site is housed in the former Monroe School, once one of four all-black elementaries in Topeka's segregated system.

In the fall of 1950, 13 black families recruited by local NAACP officials tried unsuccessfully to enroll children in all-white schools. Among those participating in the resulting federal lawsuit was Oliver Brown, whose 9-year-old daughter, Linda, was required to attend Monroe School instead of a nearer one. That case, listing Brown's name first, was consolidated with others from Virginia, South Carolina, Delaware and Washington, D.C., when the Supreme Court ruled in 1954.