



WORLD & NATION

Governor plays part in Jefferson Davis statue's removal from Kentucky Capitol



Workers prepare to remove the Jefferson Davis statue from the Kentucky state Capitol in Frankfort, Ky., on Saturday. (Ryan C. Hermens / Lexington Herald-Leader)

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

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FRANKFORT, Ky. — Having led the push to take down a statue of Jefferson Davis from the Kentucky Capitol, the state's governor had a ceremonial role Saturday in its removal from the place it stood for generations.

Gov. Andy Beshear pushed the button to a rig that lifted the 15-foot marble statue off its pedestal in the ornate Capitol Rotunda. The governor tweeted a photo showing the memorial to the Confederate president being hoisted for removal.

“Today I pressed the button to bring it down,” the Democratic governor said in his tweet. “Now, every child who walks into their Capitol feels welcome. Today we took a step forward for the betterment of every single Kentuckian.”

Joining Beshear for the historic event were two leading members of his administration — J. Michael Brown and La Tasha Buckner.

In a quintessentially Kentucky twist, workers discovered an empty bourbon bottle in the base after the statue was hoisted. Also found was a newspaper front page.

Later in the day, Beshear posted a photo showing the statue — secured in a crate — being loaded by crane onto a truck outside the statehouse. The governor tweeted that the Capitol “no longer

houses a symbol of division. Change is possible. Together, we can make it happen.”

Beshear, who took office late last year, has declared his intent to expand healthcare coverage to every Black Kentuckian, provide anti-bias and other training for police officers and increase the number of Black teachers in the state.

It was a sudden and dramatic departure for a statue that advocates wanted removed for years.

On Friday, the state Historic Properties Advisory Commission voted to move the statue to a state historic site in southern Kentucky where the Confederate leader was born. The governor requested the meeting and said he expected the panel’s support to remove the statute. The commission is responsible for statues in the state Capitol.

The panel’s vote came two days after another Davis statue was toppled by protesters in Virginia.

Calls to remove Confederate monuments, seen as symbols of slavery, have escalated amid widespread protests against police brutality toward Black Americans. The protests were sparked by the death of George Floyd, a Black man who died after a white

Minneapolis police officer pinned him down by putting his knee on Floyd's neck for several minutes as Floyd struggled to breathe.

In Louisville, protesters have demanded justice for Breonna Taylor, who was killed in her home in March. The African American EMT was shot eight times by narcotics detectives who knocked down her door while attempting to enforce a search warrant. No drugs were found.

The Davis statue had stood in the Kentucky statehouse since 1936. It occupied a corner of the rotunda near a bronze likeness of Abraham Lincoln, his Civil War adversary and the president who freed the slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation. Both men were Kentucky natives.

The commission called for the statue to be moved to the Jefferson Davis Historic Site, where Davis was born. The site features a 351-foot monument and a museum, according to a state website.

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