

# Lawmaker: Confederate sign on Mississippi flag a 'disgrace'

By Emily Wagster Pettus  
Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — The Confederate battle emblem on the 122-year-old Mississippi flag is a “disgrace” and needs to be removed, a black lawmaker said Thursday at a rally outside the state Capitol.

Longtime Democratic Sen. David Jordan of Greenwood also said the banner is an embarrassment to more than 1 million African Americans living in the state.

“Let’s create a new image for all 3 million of us,” Jordan said. “Because the

olina lawmakers and Gov. Nikki Haley removed a Confederate battle flag that had flown for years outside the Statehouse in Columbia.

Days after the Charleston shootings, Mississippi Republican House Speaker Philip Gunn said his state should change its flag because the Confederate emblem had become “a point of offense.” Since then, however, Gunn has said little about the issue.

Mississippi is the last state with a banner featuring the rebel emblem — a red field topped by a blue X dotted by 13 white stars.

Next week is the deadline for legisla-



Hundreds of people participate in a rally to remove the Confederate battle emblem from the Mississippi flag outside the state Capitol in Jackson, Miss., on Feb. 18, a month after flag supporters gathered there for their own event.

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A diverse group of about 200 people took part in the rally as lawmakers worked inside. People chanted, “Take it down! Take it down!”

The event attracted roughly the same number of people as a mostly white keep-the-flag rally that took place in the same spot in January.

Confederate symbols have been widely debated since nine black worshippers were slain last summer in a church in Charleston, South Carolina. The white man charged in the killings had previously posed for photos with the rebel flag. Within weeks, South Car-

tive committees to consider bills that would either remove the Confederate symbol or strip state funding from public entities that refuse to fly the flag. Several Mississippi colleges, schools and local governments have removed the flag since Charleston.

A white Lutheran pastor from Jackson, Thomas Clark, told the crowd Thursday that his ancestors fought for the Confederacy but he doesn’t want a state flag that offends people.

“It is important to honor the dead,” Cook said. “But it’s more important to respect the living.”

The Rev. Thomas Jenkins, bishop of New Dimensions International Ministries in Jackson, said Mississippi needs

to redesign its flag to be on “the right side of history.”

“We must remember the rules of war,” said Jenkins, who is black. “The side that loses, their flag goes down. And I have an announcement to make today — that the Confederacy lost.” The crowd erupted into cheers.

Two white men holding large state and rebel flags stood silently on the edge of the Capitol lawn, and at one point protesters went back and yelled at them: “Take it down! Shut it down! Take it down! Shut it down!” Capitol police officers watched to keep the peace.

After the rally, a black woman who

called for changing the flag went up and hugged the men.

Craig Haden of Jackson, who held one of the rebel flags, said those who want to change the state flag are misguided.

“I think a lot of them have been lied to about Southern history,” Haden said. “The Confederate States of America was a libertarian, agrarian society.”

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