



Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Harris County Precinct One

PUBLIC SERVICE | FAIR OPPORTUNITY | EQUAL JUSTICE

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NEWS RELEASE

Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Rep. Al Green, State Sen. Borris Miles, and State Rep. Ron Reynolds React to the Elimination of 16 Racially Offensive Names of Geographical Sites in Texas

Thirty years ago, Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, then a state senator, co-sponsored legislation calling to change the names of 19 geographical sites in Texas with racially offensive names. This year, however, 16 of the original sites still bore these offensive names. Together, Commissioner Ellis, U.S. Rep. Al Green, State Sen. Borris Miles and State Rep. Ron Reynolds have been advocating for bold federal leadership to change these names. Today, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (USBGN) formally approved the name changes for 16 geographical sites in Texas.

“This day has been a long time coming, but I am proud to see this change finally happen. In this moment of racial reckoning, we must follow up our verbal commitments to racial justice with action,” said **Commissioner Ellis**. “I commend the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for taking bold and swift action, and speeding up this process over the past few months so that the state of Texas no longer has these 16 geographical sites that bear the racist and offensive word ‘negro’ in them.

“However, the work is not done. Since the original legislation, 11 other sites were identified in Texas with the term ‘negro’ in them located on private land. Across our country there are still hundreds of geographic sites with racially offensive names that target Black, Hispanic, and Native communities. I hope that the USBGN will build on the progress made today in Texas, and work with other groups across the country to ensure that all racially offensive names are erased from the public domain.”

Said **Congressman Green**: “I am proud to know that the U.S. Board on Geographic Names has taken a step in the right direction by formally approving name changes that will remove racist

place names of 16 geographical sites in Texas. Now, instead of reminders of our bigoted past with names like ‘Negrohead Lake,’ Texans can traverse the state and learn about notable figures like African-American Judge Henry Doyle when in Baytown visiting the lake now renamed in his honor. As a son of the segregated South, I am opposed to anyone experiencing or reliving the horrors of racism when visiting geographic landmarks. This is why I am an original co-sponsor of former Rep. Deb Haaland’s (now Secretary of Interior) Reconciliation in Place Names Act and why I am eager to reintroduce the legislation this Congress.”

Despite legislation at the state level that should have changed the names of all geographic sites in Texas with racially offensive names back in 1991, over the years only three of these were actually renamed. Earlier proposals to make the changes had been rejected by the board on the grounds that there was not enough local involvement in the renaming process.

State Sen. Miles, who wrote a Senate Concurrent Resolution urging the USBGN to approve all the name changes in Texas, said, “the perpetuation of racially offensive language is a stain on the Lone Star State, and it is vital that the names of these geographic features be changed in order to reflect and honor the diversity of the population.”

State Rep. Reynolds commented: “Protests over racial inequality have now spurred a new reckoning over confederate monuments, schools, symbols and street names to be renamed and statutes felled. They represent institutional racism and white supremacy, and it is past time for changes. I want to thank the U.S. Board On Geographic Names for moving quickly and agreeing to remove and change these racially offensive names.”

The list of geographic sites includes a lake in Baytown, located in Harris County, named “Negrohead Lake,” which will now become “Lake Henry Doyle.” The Harris County Commissioners Court and the Baytown City Council both adopted resolutions supporting the name change in February.

The full list of geographic sites and their new names is below.

Negrohead Lake	Lake Henry Doyle
Negro Branch	Ada Simond Creek
Negrohead	Bill Pickett Hill
Negro Creek	Buffalo Soldier Creek
Negro Hollow	Freedom Hollow
Negro Bend	George Ruby Bend
Negrohead Bluff	Hendrick Arnold Bluff
Negro Head	Henry Flipper Hill
Negro Creek	Jack Johnson Creek
Negro Hollow	John Horse Hollow
Negro Creek	Kiamata Creek



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Negro Lake	Lake William Goyens
Negro Hollow	Leonard Harmon Hollow
Negro Tank	Matthew Hooks Reservoir
Negro Creek	Milton Holland Creek
Negro Gully	Norris Cuney Gully

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