



Indiana Historical Bureau

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NEWS

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“1907 Indiana Eugenics Law” state historical marker will be dedicated in Indianapolis, Indiana

A public dedication ceremony for an Indiana state historical marker is scheduled for April 12, 2007. The state historical marker commemorating Indiana’s 1907 eugenics law will be dedicated on the east lawn of the Indiana State Library and Historical Building, 140 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis at 12:30 P.M.

The text follows for the state marker entitled “1907 Indiana Eugenics Law”:

By late 1800s, Indiana authorities believed criminality, mental problems, and pauperism were hereditary. Various laws were enacted based on this belief. In 1907, Governor J. Frank Hanly approved first state eugenics law making sterilization mandatory for certain individuals in state custody. Sterilizations halted 1909 by Governor Thomas R. Marshall. Indiana Supreme Court ruled 1907 law unconstitutional 1921, citing denial of due process under Fourteenth Amendment. 1927 law reinstated sterilization, adding court appeals. Approximately 2,500 total in state custody were sterilized. Governor Otis R. Bowen approved repeal of all sterilization laws 1974; by 1977, related restrictive marriage laws repealed.

Everyone is invited to attend this ceremony that commemorates the first eugenics legislation passed in the United States. This state marker calls attention to the State of Indiana’s efforts to forcibly sterilize an “undesirable” segment of its citizens and the successful repeal of the eugenics law. The dedication of this state historical marker is in conjunction with the April 12, 2007 symposium “Indiana Eugenics: History and Legacy, 1907-2007,” which will be held at the Indiana State Library and Historical Building from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. The symposium is free and open to the public. Registration is strongly recommended; please call (317) 274-4740.

Historical markers commemorate significant Indiana individuals, places, and events, and they help communities throughout Indiana promote, preserve, and present their history for the education and enjoyment of residents and tourists of all ages. Via the Internet, that history reaches a worldwide audience. For more than 80 years the Indiana Historical Bureau, an agency of the State of Indiana, has been marking Indiana history. Since 1947, the marker format has been the large roadside marker, which has the familiar dark blue background with gold lettering and the outline of the state of Indiana at the top. There are approximately 500 of these markers across the state.

For a digital version of this release and further information about this marker, the state Historical Marker Program, and other resources about Indiana, visit the Indiana Historical Bureau Web site at www.IN.gov/history or call 317-232-2537.

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