



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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March 12, 2020

## HB 1285 Testimony Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Good morning Chair Vedaa and members of the GVA Committee.

HB 1285 is enacting legislation to create a North Dakota specific America 250 Commission, to commemorate the 250 years since America's founding. Congress established a national America 250 Commission in 2026, who briefed former Vice President Pence of their work last January.

Attached is a letter I, and other legislative leaders received in early March of 2020 encouraging North Dakota to plan our own events for our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026. In all honestly, I didn't pay much attention to the letter as we were just starting to aggressively address issues related to COVID-19 in state. Fortunately, a north Fargo neighbor of mine, Sandy Sidler, serves as a regent for the ND State Society Daughters of the American Revolution and reached out to me this past fall to see if North Dakota could get a Commission started. You will hear from her shortly and have likely received written testimony from her and other members of the organization which has chapters throughout North Dakota.

While there are still five years until our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, enacting a Commission in the coming biennium will allow the Commission to begin the early work of laying the foundation for how cities, townships, school districts, Veterans groups, businesses and nonprofits throughout the state can be a part of a much more in depth planning during the 2023-25 biennium to implement at least a year's worth of commemoration between July 2025 and July 2026. Additionally, in order to receive major regional or national exhibits, galleries and museums may need to reserve such exhibits three to five years from when they plan to have them displayed.

As you see in section 1 of the bill, a comprehensive list of state agencies, relevant statewide nonprofits and representatives from our Congressional delegation are being invited to provide leadership on the Commission to ensure it is as comprehensive as possible. The House Appropriations committee did remove a representative from each legislative caucus. In consultation with the state historical society, several of these entities were a part of the planning of our state's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary leading up to 2014 celebration.

Section 2 provides the powers and duties of the Commission. Subsection 2 of Section 2 allows the Commission to fundraise and receive funds from various entities to diversity funding sources. It is anticipated that the national America 250 Commission may have

resources from Congress to help support state efforts, which is why it is important to have representatives from our Congressional delegation offices as part of the Commission. Additionally, funds from private foundations, nonprofits, individuals, corporations and government entities may help offset any local match requirements. The attached fiscal note, prepared by the state historical society, requests \$25,000 in General Fund spending to begin the Commission's work over the next biennium. Without a fundraising or development plan in place, for the purposes of the fiscal note, \$500,000 in General Fund spending, is identified to receive an equal amount from Congress. As the development plan and more details are provided by the national America 250 Commission, the state Commission will be able to provide a more accurate request for the 23-25 biennium inclusive of expected non-General Fund dollars to offset General Fund impact.

Subsection 4 of Section 2 lays out some of the overarching duties of the Commission. The bill is drafted with a few specifics including identifying locations in the state for temporary displaying the, very heavy, replica of the Liberty Bell throughout the year, that the State Historical Society has in its collection.

Attached to my testimony, are examples of how other states have already enacted their initial plans for their state's America 250 Commission.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the creation of a North Dakota specific America 250 Commission will allow us to tell the story of North Dakota over the past 250 years, which of course includes over a century before statehood. As our nation prepares to celebrate 250 years of democracy, we will be able to make significant contributions to those discussions in every corner of the state. School districts may have bolstered civics and history curriculum, communities may have one time or ongoing discussion of what being an American means to them, traveling exhibits may meander throughout the state to provide more North Dakotans an opportunity to learn and reflect and most importantly, we, as a state will be able to collectively reaffirm our commitment to democracy, civil discourse and the opportunity for freedom for all.

I appreciate the committee's consideration of this legislation and hope that you can assist in developing a solution.

Before I take questions, Mr. Chairman, I ask for the committee to make two drafting corrections to the bill. Page, lines 8 and 9, should read "America" rather than "American", to align with the rest of the bill. Thank you.



UNITED STATES SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL  
COMMISSION

March 11, 2020

The Honorable Doug Burgum  
Governor of North Dakota  
Office of the Governor  
600 East Boulevard Avenue  
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The Honorable David Hogue  
Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore  
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The Honorable Lawrence Klemm  
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3929 Valley Drive  
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The Honorable Joan Heckaman  
Office of the Senate Minority Leader  
322 Second Avenue North  
New Rockford, ND 58356-1712

The Honorable Josh Boschee  
Office of the Assembly Minority Leader  
517 First Street North  
Fargo, ND 58102-4540

Dear North Dakota Leaders:

I have the honor of serving as Chairman of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, which is the official government body established by Congress to prepare an overall program for commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States.

The Commission is charged with planning and coordinating observances and activities associated with the 250th anniversary throughout the country. The Commission will be at the center of a network of federal, state, territorial, and local entities working together to make the 250th a once-in-a-lifetime experience for all Americans.

After a comprehensive 16-month strategic planning process, we completed our statutory requirement of submitting a Strategic Plan and Report to the President on December 31, 2019. On January 15, 2020, Vice President Pence invited members of the Commission to the White House to present an overview of our work along with a copy of the report.

This initiative, which will be referred to commonly as ‘America 250’, anticipates nearly 137,000 programs—the vast majority of which will be state- and territory-led initiatives resulting in billions of dollars in resources that will ripple through our local, state, territorial, and national economies. America 250 is organizing itself to support those state and territorial efforts.

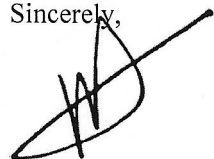
State- and territorial-level involvement is the Commission’s top priority. Several states have created Semiquincentennial entities to administer and organize their 250th programming. We strongly encourage you to establish an entity so that we can begin to work with you in commemorating the 250th. We stand ready to provide our advice and support.

As referenced in the enabling legislation, I look forward to working with you to discuss America 250 and how we can coordinate in engaging nearly 350,000,000 of our fellow Americans in the largest event in our history.

Please contact me or Frank Giordano, Executive Director of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, at [fgiordano@america250.gov](mailto:fgiordano@america250.gov) or 202-871-1776 to schedule a time when we can meet.

I look forward to working with you and your state on this historic undertaking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan DiLella', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dan DiLella  
Chairman, U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission  
[ddilella@america250.gov](mailto:ddilella@america250.gov)

# AMERICA250

U.S. SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMISSION  
AMERICA 250 FOUNDATION

## States' Acts Establishing Entities To Commemorate The 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of American Independence

Eight states have already established entities responsible for administering and organizing their individual commemorations of the 250th anniversary of our nation's independence.

The entities take one of two forms (or a hybrid of the two):

1. Direct an existing executive agency to plan, create, and administer the state's celebrations.
2. Create a new commission to plan, create, and administer the state's celebrations.

Legislation that established entities follows the brief summaries.

The national semiquincentennial commemoration is expected to include elements that increase emphasis on history education, particularly America's founding principles and documents, as well as preservation of, and visitation to historical parks and other cultural sites. The state entities which have been created emphasize the role of history education and tourism in their commemorations in varying degrees.

### **Kentucky**

The Kentucky American Independence Semiquincentennial Commission was created through executive order. The commission is attached to the governor's office and serves as an advisory body to the Governor and the Secretary of Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet.

The commission consists of nine members:

- The Secretary of State
- The President of the Senate
- The Speaker of the House
- The Chair of the Historic Properties Commission
- The Chair of the Heritage Council
- The Secretary of Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet
- Three members appointed by the Governor

The Chair of the Commission is appointed by the Governor.

## **Maryland**

The Maryland Semiquincentennial Commission was created through executive order. The commission is administered by the Maryland Department of Planning and the Governor's Coordinating Offices. It is authorized to enter into a partnership with a tax-exempt organization in its work.

The commission consists of up to 29 members: 16 ex officios; 6 members of the general public appointed by the governor; 2 members appointed by the President of the Maryland Senate; 2 members appointed by the speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, and; up to 3 members of nonprofit organizations.

The Chair of the Commission is appointed by the Governor.

Among other things, the commission is charged with: developing an inclusive commemoration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United States and all its people through civic, cultural, and historical education, events, and programming; promoting the preservation of cultural and historical resources, and; creating model curriculum about the Revolutionary War period.

## **Michigan**

The governor has tasked the Michigan History Center and the Historical Society of Michigan to prepare that state's commemoration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **New Jersey**

Enacted legislation in New Jersey directs the existing New Jersey Historical Commission to create a program to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the United States.

The legislation calls for the commission to enter into a contract with a [non-profit] private entity...to coordinate and plan the programs and observances of the State's semiquincentennial celebration" and calls for the establishment of an "advisory council" to support and guide the work of this public-private partnership, in part through fundraising assistance and promoting collaboration with state agencies.

New Jersey's bill also provides a \$500,000 annual appropriation to support semiquincentennial programs and staffing through June 30, 2028, \$200,000 of which is earmarked for the New Jersey Historical Commission, with the remaining \$300,000 to go to the state's selected non-profit partner.

## **North Carolina**

The North Carolina USA 250<sup>th</sup> Committee was created through executive action. The committee is led by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and includes representatives from several public and private organizations.

Representatives from the following organizations are members of the committee:

- State chapters of the Society of Cincinnati, Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Colonial Dames

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- The North Carolina Museums Council and Federation of North Carolina Historical Societies
- Reenactor organizations
- The Division of State Historic Sites, the Division of State History Museums, and Tryon Palace
- The Historic Preservation Office, the Office of State Archaeology, and the Office of Historical Research and Publications
- Old Salem, Historic Bethania, Historic Murfreesboro, Historic Edenton, and Historic Hillsborough, and the Friends of the Moore's Creek Battlefield
- The land preservation community
- The North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs and the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission
- The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
- The Department of Public Instruction
- The State Library; and
- The National Park Service
- The North Carolina Humanities Council

## **Pennsylvania**

Legislation in Pennsylvania created a new entity entitled the *Pennsylvania Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial*.

The legislation directs the new commission “to plan, encourage, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, Pennsylvania’s integral role in that event and the impact of its people on the nation’s past, present and future.”

Pennsylvania’s legislation specifies the size of its commission and who shall have authority to appoint commission members. The governor and certain legislative leaders have the power to make a specified number of appointments. The commission is to be comprised primarily of private citizens, along with several legislators, and ex-officio members primarily representing executive branch agencies.

The chairperson of the commission may hire staff for the commission.

The commission “may accept, use and dispose of gifts and donations of money, property or personal services... procure supplies, services and property...make contracts” and “expend...funds donated or received.”

## **South Carolina**

Legislation in South Carolina created a new entity entitled the *South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission*.

It vests in the commission the authority to “plan and execute...a proper observance of the Sestercentennial of the American Revolution in South Carolina, and in cooperation with the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust; a national organization, if any; and other similar commemorative organizations in other states.”

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South Carolina's legislation specifies the size of its commission and who shall have authority to appoint commission members. The governor and certain legislative leaders have the power to make a specified number of appointments. The commission is to be comprised of the Governor of South Carolina, the Chairman of the South Carolina Archives and History Commission, the Director of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, and individuals appointed by the governor and state legislative leaders.

The staff of the commission consists of the staffs of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History as well as other individuals hired by the commission.

Funding for the commission shall be determined and provided by the South Carolina General Assembly.

## **Tennessee**

Legislation in Tennessee created a new entity entitled the *Tennessee Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial Commission*.

The legislation directs the commission to “plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, and recognize Tennessee's integral role in that event and the impact of its people on the nation's past, present, and future.”

Tennessee's legislation specifies the size of its commission and that it would consist of ex-officio members consisting of legislators, state officials, the president of the Tennessee Sons of the Revolution, and the state regent of the Tennessee Society, Daughters of the American Revolution.

The commission “may accept, use, and dispose of gifts and donations of money, property, or personal services... procure supplies, services, and property” and “expend...funds donated or received in pursuance of contracts.”

## **Vermont**

The Vermont 250th Anniversary Commission was created by executive order to commemorate “the historic events that preceded and are associated with the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution in the State of Vermont, in celebration of our present and in anticipation of the promising future of” Vermont.

The commission is limited to no more than 14 members and include the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing, the State Historic Preservation Officer, the State Librarian, a representative of the Vermont Historical Society, and a representative from the University of Vermont. In addition, nine members shall be appointed by the Governor including a Revolutionary War historian, a member of a Revolutionary War reenactment group, a representative of the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, and a representative of a Vermont history museum. The State Historic Preservation Officer serves as the Chair.

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The Commission may designate nonprofit entities to accept private donations and public funds, grants, and donations.

## **Virginia**

Legislation in Virginia created a new entity entitled the *American Revolution 250 Commission* as an advisory body in the executive branch.

The legislation directs the new commission “formulate and implement a program for the inclusive observance of the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States and the Revolutionary War in Virginia.”

Virginia’s legislation specifies the size of its commission at 22 members consisting of 17 citizens and five ex officio representatives. The governor has the authority to appoint 12 members derived from a list provided by two state history organizations, four history organizations designate one member each, the American Battlefield Trust designates one member, and the Virginia Bar Association designates one member.

The commission is required to create an advisory council, led by a commission member, composed of citizen members who have a knowledge of relevant history or expertise.

A chairman and vice chairman of the commission will be elected by the commission’s membership.

The commission “solicit, accept, use, and dispose of funds appropriated by the General Assembly and any gifts, grants, donations, bequests, or other funds received by the Commission for the purpose of aiding or facilitating its work.”

**Contact: Shawn McBurney, [smcburney@america250.org](mailto:smcburney@america250.org), (202) 478-3883**

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