

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4875

AN ACT

To establish the United States Semiquincentennial
Commission, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “United States
3 Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that July 4, 2026,
6 the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United
7 States, as marked by the Declaration of Independence in
8 1776, and the historic events preceding that anniver-
9 sary—

10 (1) are of major significance in the development
11 of the national heritage of the United States of indi-
12 vidual liberty, representative government, and the
13 attainment of equal and inalienable rights; and

14 (2) have had a profound influence throughout
15 the world.

16 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to estab-
17 lish a Commission to provide for the observance and com-
18 memoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of
19 the United States and related events through local, State,
20 national, and international activities planned, encouraged,
21 developed, and coordinated by a national commission rep-
22 resentative of appropriate public and private authorities
23 and organizations.

24 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

25 In this Act:

1 (1) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
2 means the United States Semiquincentennial Com-
3 mission established by section 4(a).

4 (2) PRIVATE CITIZEN.—The term “private cit-
5 izen” means an individual who is not an officer or
6 employee of—

7 (A) the Federal Government; or

8 (B) a State or local government.

9 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
10 the Secretary of the Interior.

11 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established a commis-
13 sion, to be known as the “United States
14 Semiquincentennial Commission”, to plan, encourage, de-
15 velop, and coordinate the commemoration of the history
16 of the United States leading up to the 250th anniversary
17 of the founding of the United States.

18 (b) COMPOSITION.—The Commission shall be com-
19 posed of the following members:

20 (1) Four members of the Senate, of whom—

21 (A) two shall be appointed by the majority
22 leader of the Senate; and

23 (B) two shall be appointed by the minority
24 leader of the Senate.

1 (2) Four members of the House of Representa-
2 tives, of whom—

3 (A) two shall be appointed by the Speaker
4 of the House of Representatives; and

5 (B) two shall be appointed by the minority
6 leader of the House of Representatives.

7 (3) Sixteen members who are private citizens,
8 of whom—

9 (A) four shall be appointed by the majority
10 leader of the Senate;

11 (B) four shall be appointed by the minority
12 leader of the Senate;

13 (C) four shall be appointed by the Speaker
14 of the House of Representatives;

15 (D) four shall be appointed by the minority
16 leader of the House of Representatives; and

17 (E) one of whom shall be designated by
18 the President as the Chairperson.

19 (4) The following nonvoting ex officio members:

20 (A) The Secretary.

21 (B) The Secretary of State.

22 (C) The Attorney General.

23 (D) The Secretary of Defense.

24 (E) The Secretary of Education.

25 (F) The Librarian of Congress.

1 (G) The Secretary of the Smithsonian In-
2 stitution.

3 (H) The Archivist of the United States.

4 (I) The presiding officer of the Federal
5 Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

6 (c) TERM; VACANCIES.—

7 (1) TERM.—A member shall be appointed for
8 the life of the Commission.

9 (2) VACANCIES.—A vacancy on the Commis-
10 sion—

11 (A) shall not affect the powers of the Com-
12 mission; and

13 (B) shall be filled in the same manner as
14 the original appointment was made.

15 (d) MEETINGS.—All meetings of the Commission
16 shall be convened at Independence Hall in Philadelphia,
17 Pennsylvania, to honor the historical significance of the
18 building as the site of deliberations and adoption of both
19 the United States Declaration of Independence and Con-
20 stitution.

21 (e) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the
22 Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser num-
23 ber of members may hold hearings.

24 **SEC. 5. DUTIES.**

25 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall—

(1) prepare an overall program for commemorating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States and the historic events preceding that anniversary; and

(2) plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate observances and activities commemorating the historic events that preceded, and are associated with, the United States Semiquincentennial.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In preparing plans and an overall program, the Commission—

(A) shall give due consideration to any related plans and programs developed by State, local, and private groups; and

(B) may designate special committees with representatives from groups described in subparagraph (A) to plan, develop, and coordinate specific activities.

(2) EMPHASIS.—The Commission shall—

(A) emphasize the planning of events in locations of historical significance to the United States, especially in those locations that witnessed the assertion of American liberty, such as—

(i) the 13 colonies; and

1 (ii) leading cities, including Boston,
2 Charleston, New York City, and Philadel-
3 phia; and

4 (B) give special emphasis to—

5 (i) the role of persons and locations
6 with significant impact on the history of
7 the United States during the 250-year pe-
8 riod beginning on the date of execution of
9 the Declaration of Independence; and

10 (ii) the ideas associated with that his-
11 tory, which have been so important in the
12 development of the United States, in world
13 affairs, and in the quest for freedom of all
14 mankind.

15 (3) INFRASTRUCTURE.—The Commission
16 shall—

17 (A) evaluate existing infrastructure;

18 (B) include in the report required under
19 subsection (c) recommendations for what infra-
20 structure should be in place for the successful
21 undertaking of an appropriate celebration in ac-
22 cordance with this Act; and

23 (C) coordinate with State and local bodies
24 to make necessary infrastructure improvements.

25 (c) REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENT.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after
2 the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission
3 shall submit to the President a comprehensive report
4 that includes the specific recommendations of the
5 Commission for the commemoration of the 250th
6 anniversary and related events.

7 (2) RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES.—The report
8 may include recommended activities such as—

9 (A) the production, publication, and dis-
10 tribution of books, pamphlets, films, and other
11 educational materials focusing on the history,
12 culture, and political thought of the period of
13 the American Revolution;

14 (B) bibliographical and documentary
15 projects and publications;

16 (C) conferences, convocations, lectures,
17 seminars, and other programs, especially those
18 located in the 13 colonies, including the major
19 cities and buildings of national historical signifi-
20 cance of the 13 colonies;

21 (D) the development of libraries, museums,
22 historic sites, and exhibits, including mobile ex-
23 hibits;

24 (E) ceremonies and celebrations commemo-
25 rating specific events, such as—

1 (i) the signing of the Declaration of
2 Independence;

3 (ii) programs and activities focusing
4 on the national and international signifi-
5 cance of the United States Semiquincen-
6 tennial; and

7 (iii) the implications of the Semiquin-
8 centennial for present and future genera-
9 tions; and

10 (F) encouraging Federal agencies to inte-
11 grate the celebration of the Semiquincentennial
12 into the regular activities and execution of the
13 purpose of the agencies through such activities
14 as the issuance of coins, medals, certificates of
15 recognition, stamps, and the naming of vessels.

16 (3) REQUIREMENTS.—The report shall in-
17 clude—

18 (A) the recommendations of the Commis-
19 sion for the allocation of financial and adminis-
20 trative responsibility among the public and pri-
21 vate authorities and organizations recommended
22 for participation by the Commission; and

23 (B) proposals for such legislative enact-
24 ments and administrative actions as the Com-

1 mission considers necessary to carry out the
2 recommendations.

3 (d) REPORT SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS.—The Presi-
4 dent shall submit to Congress a report that contains—

5 (1) the complete report of the Commission; and

6 (2) such comments and recommendations for
7 legislation and such a description of administrative
8 actions taken by the President as the President con-
9 siders appropriate.

10 (e) POINT OF CONTACT.—The Commission, acting
11 through the secretariat of the Commission described in
12 section 9(b), shall serve as the point of contact of the Fed-
13 eral Government for all State, local, international, and pri-
14 vate sector initiatives regarding the Semiquincentennial of
15 the founding of the United States, with the purpose of
16 coordinating and facilitating all fitting and proper activi-
17 ties honoring the 250th anniversary of the founding of the
18 United States.

19 **SEC. 6. COORDINATION.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out this Act, the Com-
21 mission shall consult and cooperate with, and seek advice
22 and assistance from, appropriate Federal agencies, State
23 and local public bodies, learned societies, and historical,
24 patriotic, philanthropic, civic, professional, and related or-
25 ganizations.

1 (b) RESPONSIBILITY OF OTHER FEDERAL AGEN-
2 CIES.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—Federal agencies shall co-
4 operate with the Commission in planning, encour-
5 aging, developing, and coordinating appropriate com-
6 memorative activities.

7 (2) DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.—

8 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall un-
9 dertake a study of appropriate actions that
10 might be taken to further preserve and develop
11 historic sites and battlefields, at such time and
12 in such manner as will ensure that fitting ob-
13 servances and exhibits may be held at appro-
14 priate sites and battlefields during the 250th
15 anniversary celebration.

16 (B) REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit
17 to the Commission a report that contains the
18 results of the study and the recommendations
19 of the Secretary, in time to afford the Commis-
20 sion an opportunity—

21 (i) to review the study; and

22 (ii) to incorporate in the report de-
23 scribed in section 5(c) such findings and
24 recommendations as the Commission con-
25 siders appropriate.

1 (3) ARTS AND HUMANITIES.—

2 (A) IN GENERAL.—The presiding officer of
3 the Federal Council on the Arts and the Hu-
4 manities, the Chairperson of the National En-
5 dowment for the Arts, and the Chairperson of
6 the National Endowment for the Humanities
7 shall cooperate with the Commission, especially
8 in the encouragement and coordination of schol-
9 arly works and artistic expressions focusing on
10 the history, culture, and political thought of the
11 period predating the United States Semiquin-
12 centennial.

13 (B) LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, SMITHSONIAN
14 INSTITUTION, AND ARCHIVES.—

15 (i) IN GENERAL.—The Librarian of
16 Congress, the Secretary of the Smithsonian
17 Institution, and the Archivist of the United
18 States shall cooperate with the Commis-
19 sion, especially in the development and dis-
20 play of exhibits and collections and in the
21 development of bibliographies, catalogs,
22 and other materials relevant to the period
23 predating the United States Semiquincen-
24 tennial.

1 (ii) LOCATION.—To the maximum ex-
2 tent practicable, displays described in sub-
3 paragraph (A) shall be located in, or in fa-
4 cilities near to, buildings of historical sig-
5 nificance to the American Revolution, so as
6 to promote greater public awareness of the
7 heritage of the United States.

8 (C) SUBMISSION OF RECOMMENDA-
9 TIONS.—Each of the officers described in this
10 paragraph shall submit to the Commission a re-
11 port containing recommendations in time to af-
12 ford the Commission an opportunity—

13 (i) to review the reports; and

14 (ii) to incorporate in the report de-
15 scribed in section 5(c) such findings and
16 recommendations as the Commission con-
17 siders appropriate.

18 (4) DEPARTMENT OF STATE.—The Secretary of
19 State shall coordinate the participation of foreign
20 nations in the celebration of the United States
21 Semiquincentennial, including by soliciting the erec-
22 tion of monuments and other cultural cooperations
23 in founding cities of the United States so as—

1 (A) to celebrate the shared heritage of the
2 United States with the many peoples and na-
3 tions of the world; and

4 (B) to provide liaison and encouragement
5 for the erection of international pavilions to
6 showcase the spread of democratic institutions
7 abroad in the period following the American
8 Revolution.

9 **SEC. 7. POWERS.**

10 (a) HEARINGS.—The Commission may hold such
11 hearings, meet and act at such times and places, take such
12 testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission
13 considers advisable to carry out this Act.

14 (b) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may secure
16 directly from a Federal agency such information as
17 the Commission considers necessary to carry out this
18 Act.

19 (2) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—On request
20 of the Chairperson of the Commission, the head of
21 the agency shall provide the information to the Com-
22 mission.

23 (c) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission may use
24 the United States mails in the same manner and under

1 the same conditions as other agencies of the Federal Gov-
2 ernment.

3 (d) GIFTS.—The Commission may accept, use, and
4 dispose of gifts or donations of money, property, or per-
5 sonal services.

6 (e) ADDITIONAL POWERS.—As determined necessary
7 by the Commission, the Commission may—

8 (1) procure supplies, services, and property;

9 (2) make contracts;

10 (3) expend in furtherance of this Act funds do-
11 nated or received in pursuance of contracts entered
12 into under this Act; and

13 (4) take such actions as are necessary to enable
14 the Commission to carry out efficiently and in the
15 public interest the purposes of this Act.

16 (f) USE OF MATERIALS.—

17 (1) TIME CAPSULE.—A representative portion
18 of all books, manuscripts, miscellaneous printed
19 matter, memorabilia, relics, and other materials re-
20 lating to the United States Semiquincentennial shall
21 be deposited in a time capsule—

22 (A) to be buried in Independence Mall,
23 Philadelphia, on July 4, 2026; and

1 (B) to be unearthed on the occasion of the
2 500th anniversary of the United States of
3 America on July 4, 2276.

4 (2) OTHER MATERIALS.—All other books,
5 manuscripts, miscellaneous printed matter, memora-
6 bilia, relics, and other materials relating to the
7 United States Semiquincentennial, whether donated
8 to the Commission or collected by the Commission,
9 may be deposited for preservation in national, State,
10 or local libraries or museums or be otherwise dis-
11 posed of by the Commission, in consultation with the
12 Librarian of Congress, the Secretary of the Smithso-
13 nian Institution, the Archivist of the United States,
14 and the Administrator of General Services.

15 (g) PROPERTY.—Any property acquired by the Com-
16 mission remaining on termination of the Commission may
17 be—

18 (1) used by the Secretary for purposes of the
19 National Park Service; or

20 (2) disposed of as excess or surplus property.

21 **SEC. 8. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.**

22 (a) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—The members of
23 the Commission shall receive no compensation for service
24 on the Commission.

1 (b) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—A member of the Commis-
2 sion shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem
3 in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for an employee
4 of an agency under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title
5 5, United States Code, while away from the home or reg-
6 ular place of business of the member in the performance
7 of the duties of the Commission.

8 (c) STAFF.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Chairperson of the
10 Commission may, without regard to the civil service
11 laws (including regulations), appoint and terminate
12 an executive director and such other additional per-
13 sonnel as are necessary to enable the Commission to
14 perform the duties of the Commission.

15 (2) CONFIRMATION OF EXECUTIVE DIREC-
16 TOR.—The employment of an executive director shall
17 be subject to confirmation by the Commission.

18 (3) COMPENSATION.—

19 (A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in
20 subparagraph (B), the Chairperson of the Com-
21 mission may fix the compensation of the execu-
22 tive director and other personnel without regard
23 to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter
24 III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code,

1 relating to classification of positions and Gen-
2 eral Schedule pay rates.

3 (B) MAXIMUM RATE OF PAY.—The rate of
4 pay for the executive director and other per-
5 sonnel shall not exceed the rate payable for
6 level V of the Executive Schedule under section
7 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

8 (d) DETAIL OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOY-
9 EES.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—An employee of the Federal
11 Government may be detailed to the Commission
12 without reimbursement.

13 (2) CIVIL SERVICE STATUS.—The detail of the
14 employee shall be without interruption or loss of civil
15 service status or privilege.

16 (e) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMIT-
17 TENT SERVICES.—The Chairperson of the Commission
18 may procure temporary and intermittent services in ac-
19 cordance with section 3109(b) of title 5, United States
20 Code, at rates for individuals that do not exceed the daily
21 equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for
22 level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of
23 that title.

1 (f) ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—The Commission may
2 appoint such advisory committees as the Commission de-
3 termines necessary.

4 **SEC. 9. EXPENDITURES OF COMMISSION.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—All expenditures of the Commis-
6 sion shall be made solely from donated funds.

7 (b) ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARIAT.—The Secretary
8 of the Interior shall, through a competitive process, seek
9 to enter into an arrangement with a nonprofit organiza-
10 tion, the mission of which is consistent with the purpose
11 of this Act. Under such arrangement, such nonprofit orga-
12 nization shall—

13 (1) serve as the secretariat of the Commission,
14 including by serving as the point of contact under
15 section 5(e);

16 (2) house the administrative offices of the Com-
17 mission;

18 (3) assume responsibility for funds of the Com-
19 mission; and

20 (4) provide to the Commission financial and ad-
21 ministrative services, including services related to
22 budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, per-
23 sonnel, and procurement.

24 (c) PAYMENT FOR FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE
25 SERVICES.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),
2 payment for services provided under subsection
3 (b)(4) shall be made in advance, or by reimburse-
4 ment, from funds of the Commission in such
5 amounts as may be agreed on by the Chairperson of
6 the Commission and the secretariat of the Commis-
7 sion.

8 (2) RELATIONSHIP TO REGULATIONS.—

9 (A) ERRONEOUS PAYMENTS.—The regula-
10 tions under section 5514 of title 5, United
11 States Code, relating to the collection of indebt-
12 edness of personnel resulting from erroneous
13 payments shall apply to the collection of erro-
14 neous payments made to, or on behalf of, a
15 Commission employee.

16 (B) NO PROMULGATION BY COMMISSION.—
17 The Commission shall not be required to pre-
18 scribe any regulations relating to the matters
19 described in subparagraph (A).

20 (d) ANNUAL REPORT.—Once each year during the
21 period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and
22 ending on December 31, 2027, the Commission shall sub-
23 mit to Congress a report of the activities of the Commis-
24 sion, including an accounting of funds received and ex-
25 pended during the year covered by the report.

1 **SEC. 10. TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.**

2 The Commission shall terminate on December 31,
3 2027.

Passed the House of Representatives July 5, 2016.

Attest:

Clerk.

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