

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4875

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 23, 2016

Mr. MEEHAN (for himself and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

A BILL

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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “United States Semi-
5 quincentennial Commission Act of 2016”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that July 4, 2026,
8 the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United
9 States, as marked by the Declaration of Independence in

1 1776, and the historic events preceding that anniver-
2 sary—

3 (1) are of major significance in the development
4 of the national heritage of the United States of indi-
5 vidual liberty, representative government, and the
6 attainment of equal and inalienable rights; and

7 (2) have had a profound influence throughout
8 the world.

9 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to estab-
10 lish a Commission to provide for the observance and com-
11 memoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of
12 the United States and related events through local, State,
13 national, and international activities planned, encouraged,
14 developed, and coordinated by a national commission rep-
15 resentative of appropriate public and private authorities
16 and organizations.

17 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

18 In this Act:

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

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

25 (A) the Federal Government; or

1 (B) a State or local government.

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

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

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is established a commis-
6 sion, to be known as the “United States Semiquincenten-
7 nial Commission”, to plan, encourage, develop, and coordi-
8 nate the commemoration of the history of the United
9 States leading up to the 250th anniversary of the founding
10 of the United States.

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

13 (1) 4 members of the Senate, of whom—

14 (A) 2 shall be appointed by the majority
15 leader of the Senate; and

16 (B) 2 shall be appointed by the minority
17 leader of the Senate.

18 (2) 4 members of the House of Representatives,
19 of whom—

20 (A) 2 shall be appointed by the Speaker of
21 the House of Representatives; and

22 (B) 2 shall be appointed by the minority
23 leader of the House of Representatives.

24 (3) 16 members who are private citizens, of
25 whom—

1 (A) 4 shall be appointed by the majority
2 leader of the Senate;

3 (B) 4 shall be appointed by the minority
4 leader of the Senate;

5 (C) 4 shall be appointed by the Speaker of
6 the House of Representatives;

7 (D) 4 shall be appointed by the minority
8 leader of the House of Representatives; and

9 (E) 1 of whom shall be designated by the
10 President as the Chairperson.

11 (4) The following nonvoting ex officio members:

12 (A) The Secretary.

13 (B) The Secretary of State.

14 (C) The Attorney General.

15 (D) The Secretary of Defense.

16 (E) The Secretary of Education.

17 (F) The Librarian of Congress.

18 (G) The Secretary of the Smithsonian In-
19 stitution.

20 (H) The Archivist of the United States.

21 (I) The presiding officer of the Federal
22 Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

23 (c) TERM; VACANCIES.—

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

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

3 (A) shall not affect the powers of the Com-
4 mission; and

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

7 (d) MEETINGS.—All meetings of the Commission
8 shall be convened at Independence Hall in Philadelphia,
9 Pennsylvania, to honor the historical significance of the
10 building as the site of deliberations and adoption of both
11 the United States Declaration of Independence and Con-
12 stitution.

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

16 **SEC. 5. DUTIES.**

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

18 (1) prepare an overall program for commemo-
19 rating the 250th anniversary of the founding of the
20 United States and the historic events preceding that
21 anniversary; and

22 (2) plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate ob-
23 servances and activities commemorating the historic
24 events that preceded, and are associated with, the
25 United States Semiquincentennial.

1 (b) REQUIREMENTS.—

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

4 (A) shall give due consideration to any re-
5 lated plans and programs developed by State,
6 local, and private groups; and

7 (B) may designate special committees with
8 representatives from groups described in sub-
9 paragraph (A) to plan, develop, and coordinate
10 specific activities.

11 (2) EMPHASIS.—The Commission shall—

12 (A) emphasize the planning of events in lo-
13 cations of historical significance to the United
14 States, especially in those locations that wit-
15 nessed the assertion of American liberty, such
16 as—

17 (i) the 13 colonies; and

18 (ii) leading cities, including Boston,
19 Charleston, New York City, and Philadel-
20 phia; and

21 (B) give special emphasis to—

22 (i) the role of persons and locations
23 with significant impact on the history of
24 the United States during the 250-year pe-

1 riod beginning on the date of execution of
2 the Declaration of Independence; and

3 (ii) the ideas associated with that his-
4 tory, which have been so important in the
5 development of the United States, in world
6 affairs, and in the quest for freedom of all
7 mankind.

8 (3) INFRASTRUCTURE.—The Commission
9 shall—

10 (A) evaluate existing infrastructure;

11 (B) include in the report required under
12 subsection (c) recommendations for what infra-
13 structure should be in place for the successful
14 undertaking of an appropriate celebration in ac-
15 cordance with this Act; and

16 (C) coordinate with State and local bodies
17 to make necessary infrastructure improvements.

18 (c) REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENT.—

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

1 (2) RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES.—The report
2 may include recommend activities such as—

3 (A) the production, publication, and dis-
4 tribution of books, pamphlets, films, and other
5 educational materials focusing on the history,
6 culture, and political thought of the period of
7 the American Revolution;

8 (B) bibliographical and documentary
9 projects and publications;

10 (C) conferences, convocations, lectures,
11 seminars, and other programs, especially those
12 located in the 13 colonies, including the major
13 cities and buildings of national historical signifi-
14 cance of the 13 colonies;

15 (D) the development of libraries, museums,
16 historic sites, and exhibits, including mobile ex-
17 hibits;

18 (E) ceremonies and celebrations commemo-
19 rating specific events, such as—

20 (i) the signing of the Declaration of
21 Independence;

22 (ii) programs and activities focusing
23 on the national and international signifi-
24 cance of the United States Semiquincen-
25 tennial; and

1 (iii) the implications of the Semiquin-
2 centennial for present and future genera-
3 tions; and

4 (F) encouraging Federal agencies to inte-
5 grate the celebration of the Semiquincentennial
6 into the regular activities and execution of the
7 purpose of the agencies through such activities
8 as the issuance of coins, medals, certificates of
9 recognition, stamps, and the naming of vessels.

10 (3) REQUIREMENTS.—The report shall in-
11 clude—

12 (A) the recommendations of the Commis-
13 sion for the allocation of financial and adminis-
14 trative responsibility among the public and pri-
15 vate authorities and organizations recommended
16 for participation by the Commission; and

17 (B) proposals for such legislative enact-
18 ments and administrative actions as the Com-
19 mission considers necessary to carry out the
20 recommendations.

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

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

24 (2) such comments and recommendations for
25 legislation and such a description of administrative

1 actions taken by the President as the President con-
2 siders appropriate.

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

12 **SEC. 6. COORDINATION.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out this Act, the Com-
14 mission shall consult and cooperate with, and seek advice
15 and assistance from, appropriate Federal agencies, State
16 and local public bodies, learned societies, and historical,
17 patriotic, philanthropic, civic, professional, and related or-
18 ganizations.

19 (b) RESPONSIBILITY OF OTHER FEDERAL AGEN-
20 CIES.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Federal agencies shall co-
22 operate with the Commission in planning, encour-
23 aging, developing, and coordinating appropriate com-
24 memorative activities.

25 (2) DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall un-
2 dertake a study of appropriate actions that
3 might be taken to further preserve and develop
4 historic sites and battlefields, at such time and
5 in such manner as will ensure that fitting ob-
6 servances and exhibits may be held at appro-
7 priate sites and battlefields during the 250th
8 anniversary celebration.

9 (B) REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit
10 to the Commission a report that contains the
11 results of the study and the recommendations
12 of the Secretary, in time to afford the Commis-
13 sion an opportunity—

14 (i) to review the study; and

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

19 (3) ARTS AND HUMANITIES.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—The presiding officer of
21 the Federal Council on the Arts and the Hu-
22 manities, the Chairperson of the National En-
23 dowment for the Arts, and the Chairperson of
24 the National Endowment for the Humanities
25 shall cooperate with the Commission, especially

1 in the encouragement and coordination of schol-
2 arly works and artistic expressions focusing on
3 the history, culture, and political thought of the
4 period predating the United States Semiquin-
5 centennial.

6 (B) LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, SMITHSONIAN
7 INSTITUTION, AND ARCHIVES.—

8 (i) IN GENERAL.—The Librarian of
9 Congress, the Secretary of the Smithsonian
10 Institution, and the Archivist of the United
11 States shall cooperate with the Commis-
12 sion, especially in the development and dis-
13 play of exhibits and collections and in the
14 development of bibliographies, catalogs,
15 and other materials relevant to the period
16 predating the United States Semiquincen-
17 tennial.

18 (ii) LOCATION.—To the maximum ex-
19 tent practicable, displays described in sub-
20 paragraph (A) shall be located in, or in fa-
21 cilities near to, buildings of historical sig-
22 nificance to the American Revolution, so as
23 to promote greater public awareness of the
24 heritage of the United States.

1 (C) SUBMISSION OF RECOMMENDA-
2 TIONS.—Each of the officers described in this
3 paragraph shall submit to the Commission a re-
4 port containing recommendations in time to af-
5 ford the Commission an opportunity—

6 (i) to review the reports; and

7 (ii) to incorporate in the report de-
8 scribed in section 5(c) such findings and
9 recommendations as the Commission con-
10 siders appropriate.

11 (4) DEPARTMENT OF STATE.—The Secretary of
12 State shall coordinate the participation of foreign
13 nations in the celebration of the United States
14 Semiquincentennial, including by soliciting the erec-
15 tion of monuments and other cultural cooperations
16 in founding cities of the United States so as—

17 (A) to celebrate the shared heritage of the
18 United States with the many peoples and na-
19 tions of the world; and

20 (B) to provide liaison and encouragement
21 for the erection of international pavilions to
22 showcase the spread of democratic institutions
23 abroad in the period following the American
24 Revolution.

1 **SEC. 7. POWERS.**

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

6 (b) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may secure
8 directly from a Federal agency such information as
9 the Commission considers necessary to carry out this
10 Act.

11 (2) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—On request
12 of the Chairperson of the Commission, the head of
13 the agency shall provide the information to the Com-
14 mission.

15 (c) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission may use
16 the United States mails in the same manner and under
17 the same conditions as other agencies of the Federal Gov-
18 ernment.

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

22 (e) ADDITIONAL POWERS.—As determined necessary
23 by the Commission, the Commission may—

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

25 (2) make contracts;

1 (3) expend in furtherance of this Act funds ap-
2 propriated, donated, or received in pursuance of con-
3 tracts entered into under this Act; and

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

7 (f) USE OF MATERIALS.—

8 (1) TIME CAPSULE.—A representative portion
9 of all books, manuscripts, miscellaneous printed
10 matter, memorabilia, relics, and other materials re-
11 lating to the United States Semiquincentennial shall
12 be deposited in a time capsule—

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

15 (B) to be unearthed on the occasion of the
16 500th anniversary of the United States of
17 America on July 4, 2276.

18 (2) OTHER MATERIALS.—All other books,
19 manuscripts, miscellaneous printed matter, memora-
20 abilia, relics, and other materials relating to the
21 United States Semiquincentennial, whether donated
22 to the Commission or collected by the Commission,
23 may be deposited for preservation in national, State,
24 or local libraries or museums or be otherwise dis-
25 posed of by the Commission, in consultation with the

1 Librarian of Congress, the Secretary of the Smithso-
2 nian Institution, the Archivist of the United States,
3 and the Administrator of General Services.

4 (g) PROPERTY.—Any property acquired by the Com-
5 mission remaining on termination of the Commission may
6 be—

7 (1) used by the Secretary for purposes of the
8 National Park Service; or

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

10 **SEC. 8. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.**

11 (a) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—The members of
12 the Commission shall receive no compensation for service
13 on the Commission.

14 (b) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—A member of the Commis-
15 sion shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem
16 in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for an employee
17 of an agency under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title
18 5, United States Code, while away from the home or reg-
19 ular place of business of the member in the performance
20 of the duties of the Commission.

21 (c) STAFF.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Chairperson of the
23 Commission may, without regard to the civil service
24 laws (including regulations), appoint and terminate
25 an executive director and such other additional per-

1 sonnel as are necessary to enable the Commission to
2 perform the duties of the Commission.

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

6 (3) COMPENSATION.—

7 (A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in
8 subparagraph (B), the Chairperson of the Com-
9 mission may fix the compensation of the execu-
10 tive director and other personnel without regard
11 to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter
12 III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code,
13 relating to classification of positions and Gen-
14 eral Schedule pay rates.

15 (B) MAXIMUM RATE OF PAY.—The rate of
16 pay for the executive director and other per-
17 sonnel shall not exceed the rate payable for
18 level V of the Executive Schedule under section
19 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

20 (d) DETAIL OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOY-
21 EES.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—An employee of the Federal
23 Government may be detailed to the Commission
24 without reimbursement.

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

4 (e) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMIT-
5 TENT SERVICES.—The Chairperson of the Commission
6 may procure temporary and intermittent services in ac-
7 cordance with section 3109(b) of title 5, United States
8 Code, at rates for individuals that do not exceed the daily
9 equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for
10 level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of
11 that title.

12 (f) ADVISORY COMMITTEES.—The Commission may
13 appoint such advisory committees as the Commission de-
14 termines necessary.

15 **SEC. 9. EXPENDITURES OF COMMISSION.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—All expenditures of the Commis-
17 sion shall be made solely from—

18 (1) donated funds; and

19 (2) funds specifically appropriated for the Com-
20 mission.

21 (b) ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARIAT.—The Commis-
22 sion shall seek to enter into an arrangement with USA
23 250, Incorporated, under which USA 250, Incorporated,
24 shall—

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

4 (2) house the administrative offices of the Com-
5 mission;

6 (3) assume responsibility for funds of the Com-
7 mission; and

8 (4) provide to the Commission financial and ad-
9 ministrative services, including services related to
10 budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, per-
11 sonnel, and procurement.

12 (c) PAYMENT FOR FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE
13 SERVICES.—

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

21 (2) RELATIONSHIP TO REGULATIONS.—

22 (A) ERRONEOUS PAYMENTS.—The regula-
23 tions under section 5514 of title 5, United
24 States Code, relating to the collection of indebt-
25 edness of personnel resulting from erroneous

1 payments shall apply to the collection of erro-
2 neous payments made to, or on behalf of, a
3 Commission employee.

4 (B) APPROPRIATIONS.—The regulations
5 under sections 1513(d) and 1514 of title 31,
6 United States Code, relating to the administra-
7 tive control of funds, shall apply to appropria-
8 tions of the Commission.

9 (C) NO PROMULGATION BY COMMISSION.—
10 The Commission shall not be required to pre-
11 scribe any regulations relating to the matters
12 described in subparagraphs (A) and (B).

13 (d) ANNUAL REPORT.—Once each year during the
14 period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and
15 ending on December 31, 2027, the Commission shall sub-
16 mit to Congress a report of the activities of the Commis-
17 sion, including an accounting of funds received and ex-
18 pended during the year covered by the report.

19 **SEC. 10. TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.**

20 The Commission shall terminate on December 31,
21 2027.

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