

Union Calendar No. 245

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2989

[Report No. 115–340]

To establish the Frederick Douglass Bicentennial Commission.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 21, 2017

Ms. NORTON (for herself and Mr. HARRIS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

OCTOBER 5, 2017

Additional sponsors: Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania, Mr. GOSAR, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. RUSSELL, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. SMUCKER, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. RUSH, Mr. DENT, Mrs. COMSTOCK, Ms. MOORE, Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia, and Mr. MEEHAN

OCTOBER 5, 2017

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on June 21, 2017]

A BILL

To establish the Frederick Douglass Bicentennial
Commission.

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 “Frederick Douglass Bi-*
5 *centennial Commission Act”.*

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 *Congress makes the following findings:*

8 *(1) Born into slavery on the Eastern Shore of*
9 *Maryland in 1818 and given the name Frederick Au-*
10 *gustus Washington Bailey after his mother Harriet*
11 *Bailey, Frederick Douglass has been called the father*
12 *of the civil rights movement.*

13 *(2) Douglass rose through determination, bril-*
14 *liance, and eloquence to shape the American Nation.*
15 *He was an abolitionist, human rights and women’s*
16 *rights activist, orator, author, journalist, publisher,*
17 *and social reformer.*

18 *(3) Taught basic reading skills by his mistress*
19 *until she was forced to stop, Douglass continued to*
20 *teach himself to read and write and taught other*
21 *slaves to read despite risks including death.*

22 *(4) During the course of his remarkable life*
23 *Frederick Douglass escaped from slavery, became*
24 *internationally renowned for his eloquence in the*

1 *cause of liberty, and went on to serve the national*
2 *government in several official capacities.*

3 *(5) Forced to leave the country to avoid arrest*
4 *as an escaped slave, he returned to become a staunch*
5 *advocate of the Union cause and helped recruit Afri-*
6 *can-American troops for the Union Army, including*
7 *two of his sons, Charles and Lewis Douglass. His per-*
8 *sonal relationship with Abraham Lincoln helped per-*
9 *suade the President to make emancipation a cause of*
10 *the Civil War.*

11 *(6) With the abolition of slavery at the close of*
12 *the Civil War, Douglass then turned his attention to*
13 *the full integration of African-Americans into the po-*
14 *litical and economic life of the United States. Com-*
15 *mitted to freedom, Douglass dedicated his life to*
16 *achieving justice for all Americans, in particular Af-*
17 *rican-Americans, women, and minority groups. He*
18 *envisioned America as an inclusive Nation strength-*
19 *ened by diversity and free of discrimination.*

20 *(7) Douglass served as an advisor to Presidents.*
21 *Abraham Lincoln referred to him as the most meri-*
22 *torious man of the nineteenth century. Douglass was*
23 *appointed to several offices. He served as the United*
24 *States Marshal of the District of Columbia under*
25 *Rutherford B. Hayes' administration; President*

1 *James Garfield appointed Douglass the District of*
2 *Columbia Recorder of Deeds. In 1889, President Ben-*
3 *jamin Harrison appointed Frederick Douglass to be*
4 *the United States minister to Haiti. He was also ap-*
5 *pointed by President Grant to serve as Assistant Sec-*
6 *retary of the Commission of Inquiry to Santo Do-*
7 *mingo.*

8 *(8) Douglass lived in the District of Columbia*
9 *for 23 of his 57 years as a free man, and in recogni-*
10 *tion of his leadership and continuous fight for justice*
11 *and freedom, his home, Cedar Hill, was established as*
12 *a National Historic Site in Anacostia, in Southeast*
13 *Washington, DC.*

14 *(9) The statue of Frederick Douglass in the*
15 *United States Capitol is a gift from the almost*
16 *700,000 residents of the District of Columbia.*

17 *(10) All Americans could benefit from studying*
18 *the life of Frederick Douglass, for Douglass dedicated*
19 *his own life to ensuring freedom and equality for fu-*
20 *ture generations of Americans. This Nation should en-*
21 *sure that his tireless struggle, transformative words,*
22 *and inclusive vision of humanity continue to inspire*
23 *and sustain us.*

24 *(11) The year 2018 marks the bicentennial anni-*
25 *versary of the birth of Frederick Douglass, and a com-*

1 *mission should be established to plan, develop, and*
2 *carry out, and to recommend to Congress, programs*
3 *and activities that are fitting and proper to celebrate*
4 *that anniversary in a manner that appropriately*
5 *honors Frederick Douglass.*

6 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT.**

7 *There is established a commission to be known as the*
8 *Frederick Douglass Bicentennial Commission (referred to*
9 *in this Act as the “Commission”).*

10 **SEC. 4. DUTIES.**

11 *The Commission shall have the following duties:*

12 *(1) To plan, develop, and carry out programs*
13 *and activities that are fitting and proper to honor*
14 *Frederick Douglass on the occasion of the bicentennial*
15 *anniversary of Douglass’ birth.*

16 *(2) To recommend to Congress programs and ac-*
17 *tivities that the Commission considers fitting and*
18 *proper to honor Frederick Douglass on such occasion,*
19 *and the entity or entities in the Federal Government*
20 *that the Commission considers most appropriate to*
21 *carry out such programs and activities.*

22 **SEC. 5. MEMBERSHIP.**

23 *(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission*
24 *shall be composed of 16 members appointed as follows:*

1 (1) *Two members, each of whom shall be a quali-*
2 *fied citizen described in subsection (b), appointed by*
3 *the President.*

4 (2) *One member, who shall be a qualified citizen*
5 *described in subsection (b), appointed by the Presi-*
6 *dent on the recommendation of the Governor of Mary-*
7 *land.*

8 (3) *One member, who shall be a qualified citizen*
9 *described in subsection (b), appointed by the Presi-*
10 *dent on the recommendation of the Governor of Mas-*
11 *sachusetts.*

12 (4) *One member, who shall be a qualified citizen*
13 *described in subsection (b), appointed by the Presi-*
14 *dent on the recommendation of the Governor of New*
15 *York.*

16 (5) *One member, who shall be a qualified citizen*
17 *described in subsection (b), appointed by the Presi-*
18 *dent on the recommendation of the Mayor of the Dis-*
19 *trict of Columbia.*

20 (6) *Three members, at least one of whom shall be*
21 *a Member of the House of Representatives, appointed*
22 *by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

23 (7) *Three members, at least one of whom shall be*
24 *a Senator, appointed by the majority leader of the*
25 *Senate.*

1 (8) *Two members, at least one of whom shall be*
2 *a Member of the House of Representatives, appointed*
3 *by the minority leader of the House of Representa-*
4 *tives.*

5 (9) *Two members, at least one of whom shall be*
6 *a Senator, appointed by the minority leader of the*
7 *Senate.*

8 (b) *QUALIFIED CITIZEN.—A qualified citizen described*
9 *in this subsection is a private citizen of the United States*
10 *with—*

11 (1) *a demonstrated dedication to educating oth-*
12 *ers about the importance of historical figures and*
13 *events; and*

14 (2) *substantial knowledge and appreciation of*
15 *Frederick Douglass.*

16 (c) *TIME OF APPOINTMENT.—Each initial appoint-*
17 *ment of a member of the Commission shall be made before*
18 *the expiration of the 60-day period beginning on the date*
19 *of the enactment of this Act.*

20 (d) *CONTINUATION OF MEMBERSHIP.—If a member of*
21 *the Commission was appointed to the Commission as a*
22 *Member of Congress, and ceases to be a Member of Congress,*
23 *that member may continue to serve on the Commission for*
24 *not longer than the 30-day period beginning on the date*
25 *that member ceases to be a Member of Congress.*

1 (e) *TERMS.*—*Each member shall be appointed for the*
2 *life of the Commission.*

3 (f) *VACANCIES.*—*A vacancy in the Commission shall*
4 *not affect the powers of the Commission but shall be filled*
5 *in the manner in which the original appointment was*
6 *made.*

7 (g) *BASIC PAY.*—*Members shall serve on the Commis-*
8 *sion without pay.*

9 (h) *TRAVEL EXPENSES.*—*Each member shall receive*
10 *travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence,*
11 *in accordance with sections 5702 and 5703 of title 5, United*
12 *States Code.*

13 (i) *QUORUM.*—*Six members of the Commission shall*
14 *constitute a quorum but a lesser number may hold hearings.*

15 (j) *CHAIR.*—*The Commission shall select a Chair from*
16 *among the members of the Commission.*

17 (k) *MEETINGS.*—*The Commission shall meet at the call*
18 *of the Chair. Periodically, the Commission shall hold a*
19 *meeting in Rochester, New York.*

20 **SEC. 6. DIRECTOR AND STAFF.**

21 (a) *DIRECTOR.*—*The Commission may appoint and*
22 *fix the pay of a Director and such additional personnel as*
23 *the Commission considers to be appropriate.*

24 (b) *APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN CIVIL SERVICE*
25 *LAWS.*—

1 (1) *DIRECTOR.*—*The Director of the Commission*
2 *may be appointed without regard to the provisions of*
3 *title 5, United States Code, governing appointments*
4 *in the competitive service, and may be paid without*
5 *regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter*
6 *III of chapter 53 of that title relating to classification*
7 *and General Schedule pay rates.*

8 (2) *STAFF.*—*The staff of the Commission shall be*
9 *appointed subject to the provisions of title 5, United*
10 *States Code, governing appointments in the competi-*
11 *tive service, and shall be paid in accordance with the*
12 *provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chap-*
13 *ter 53 of that title relating to classification and Gen-*
14 *eral Schedule pay rates.*

15 **SEC. 7. POWERS.**

16 (a) *HEARINGS AND SESSIONS.*—*The Commission may,*
17 *for the purpose of carrying out this Act, hold such hearings,*
18 *sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony,*
19 *and receive such evidence as the Commission considers to*
20 *be appropriate.*

21 (b) *POWERS OF MEMBERS AND AGENTS.*—*Any mem-*
22 *ber or agent of the Commission may, if authorized by the*
23 *Commission, take any action that the Commission is au-*
24 *thorized to take by this Act.*

1 (c) *OBTAINING OFFICIAL DATA.*—*The Commission*
2 *may secure directly from any department or agency of the*
3 *United States information necessary to enable the Commis-*
4 *sion to carry out this Act. Upon request of the Chair of*
5 *the Commission, the head of that department or agency*
6 *shall furnish that information to the Commission.*

7 (d) *MAILS.*—*The Commission may use the United*
8 *States mails in the same manner and under the same condi-*
9 *tions as other departments and agencies of the United*
10 *States.*

11 (e) *ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES.*—*Upon the*
12 *request of the Commission, the Administrator of General*
13 *Services shall provide to the Commission, on a reimbursable*
14 *basis, the administrative support services necessary for the*
15 *Commission to carry out its responsibilities under this Act.*

16 (f) *GIFTS.*—*The Commission may solicit, accept, use,*
17 *and dispose of gifts, bequests, or devises of money or other*
18 *property for carrying out its duties.*

19 **SEC. 8. REPORTS.**

20 (a) *INITIAL REPORT.*—*Not later than August 1, 2018,*
21 *the Commission shall submit to Congress an initial report*
22 *containing its recommendations under section 4(2).*

23 (b) *FINAL REPORT.*—*Not later than June 1, 2019, the*
24 *Commission shall submit a final report to Congress, and*
25 *shall include in the final report—*

- 1 (1) *a summary of its activities and programs;*
- 2 (2) *a final accounting of the funds the Commis-*
- 3 *sion received and expended; and*
- 4 (3) *any other information that the Commission*
- 5 *considers to be appropriate.*

6 **SEC. 9. TERMINATION.**

7 *The Commission shall terminate 30 days after submit-*

8 *ting the final report pursuant to section 8(b).*

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