

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4738

AN ACT

To direct the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to establish a history project to collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials, written materials, and photographs of those who were affected by COVID–19, 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 “COVID–19 American
5 History Project Act”.

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

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) COVID–19 is a highly infectious respiratory
9 illness caused by a virus called SARS–CoV–2. This
10 disease has caused a worldwide pandemic affecting
11 millions of people and has fundamentally altered the
12 operations of the world’s cities, businesses, and
13 schools.

14 (2) The outbreak of COVID–19 was first de-
15 tected in Wuhan, China, and on January 21, 2020,
16 the first confirmed case of COVID–19 was diag-
17 nosed in the United States.

18 (3) The World Health Organization (WHO) de-
19 clared COVID–19 a global pandemic on March 11,
20 2020, and the President of the United States issued
21 a national emergency declaration concerning the
22 pandemic on March 13, 2020.

23 (4) To date, 194 million individuals have tested
24 positive for COVID–19. Of those, 35 million are
25 Americans; that is, more than one of every 10 Amer-

1 icans. Almost 4.2 million people have died from
2 COVID–19 globally, and over 610,000 deaths have
3 occurred in the United States.

4 (5) The first American received the COVID–19
5 vaccine on December 14, 2020. Since then, 163 mil-
6 lion Americans have been vaccinated and 188.5 mil-
7 lion have received at least one dose. The vaccine be-
8 came available to every American adult 18 and older
9 on April 19, 2021.

10 (6) While there are still remaining cases, and
11 healthcare professionals and researchers are tire-
12 lessly working to eradicate the disease, it is impor-
13 tant we begin work to fully capture the firsthand
14 personal stories of those impacted by COVID–19, a
15 major national event in the history of this country.

16 (7) Oral histories are of immeasurable value to
17 historians, researchers, authors, journalists, film
18 makers, scholars, students, and citizens of all walks
19 of life. Survivors of the pandemic, survivors of loved
20 ones who lost their lives to COVID–19, and frontline
21 healthcare workers should be remembered and can
22 provide valuable firsthand knowledge on how this
23 pandemic impacted their everyday lives.

24 (8) It is in the Nation’s best interest to collect
25 and catalog oral histories of Americans who were af-

1 fected by the pandemic so that future generations
2 will have original sources of information regarding
3 the lives and times of those who lived through or
4 died from the COVID–19 pandemic and conditions
5 under which they endured. These accounts will allow
6 an opportunity for Americans to remember those
7 who lost their lives and may learn firsthand of the
8 heroics, loneliness, horrors, and triumphs of the
9 healthcare workers who combated this pandemic.

10 (9) The Library of Congress, as the Nation’s
11 oldest Federal cultural institution and largest and
12 most inclusive library in human history, is an appro-
13 priate repository to collect, preserve, and make avail-
14 able to the public an archive of these oral histories.
15 The Library’s American Folklife Center has exper-
16 tise in the management of documentation projects
17 and experience in the development of cultural and
18 educational projects for the public.

19 (b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to create
20 a new federally sponsored, authorized, and funded project
21 that will coordinate at a national level the collection of
22 video and audio recordings of personal histories and
23 testimonials, written materials, and photographs of Ameri-
24 cans who contracted COVID–19, individuals who lost fam-
25 ily members and friends to COVID–19, and healthcare

1 workers who fought to treat the illness. These stories will
2 inform, assist, and encourage local efforts to preserve the
3 stories of this pandemic and the ones who lost their battle
4 to the pandemic.

5 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROJECT AT AMERICAN**
6 **FOLKLIFE CENTER TO COLLECT VIDEO AND**
7 **AUDIO RECORDINGS, WRITTEN MATERIALS,**
8 **AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF INDIVIDUALS AF-**
9 **FECTED BY COVID-19.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the American
11 Folklife Center at the Library of Congress shall establish
12 a history project to be known as the “COVID-19 Amer-
13 ican History Project” (hereafter referred to as the
14 “Project”) to—

15 (1) collect video and audio recordings of per-
16 sonal histories and testimonials of individuals who
17 contracted COVID-19, individuals who lost family
18 members to COVID-19, and frontline healthcare
19 workers who fought to treat the illness;

20 (2) create a collection of the recordings ob-
21 tained (including a catalog and index) which will be
22 available for public use through the National Digital
23 Library of the Library of Congress and such other
24 methods as the Director considers appropriate, to

1 the extent feasible and subject to available resources;
2 and

3 (3) solicit, reproduce, and collect written mate-
4 rials (such as letters and diaries) and photographs
5 relevant to the personal histories of individuals who
6 contracted COVID–19, individuals who lost family
7 members and friends to COVID–19, and frontline
8 healthcare workers who fought to treat the illness,
9 and catalog such materials in a manner the Director
10 considers appropriate, consistent with and com-
11 plimentary to the efforts described in paragraphs (1)
12 and (2).

13 (b) USE OF AND CONSULTATION WITH OTHER ENTI-
14 TIES.—The Director may carry out the activities described
15 in paragraphs (1) and (3) of subsection (a) through agree-
16 ments and partnerships entered into with other govern-
17 ment and private entities, and may otherwise consult with
18 interested persons (within the limits of available re-
19 sources) and develop appropriate guidelines and arrange-
20 ments for soliciting, acquiring, and making available re-
21 cordings, written materials, and photographs under the
22 Project. The recordings, written materials, and photo-
23 graphs shall be available on the Library of Congress
24 website and may be used to educate the public on the im-
25 pacts COVID–19 has on everyday Americans.

1 (c) TIMING.—As soon as practicable after the enact-
2 ment of this Act, the Director shall begin collecting video
3 and audio recordings under subsection (a)(1).

4 **SEC. 4. PRIVATE SUPPORT.**

5 (a) ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS.—The Librarian of
6 Congress may solicit and accept donations of funds and
7 in-kind contributions to carry out the Project, subject to
8 subsection (c).

9 (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE GIFT AC-
10 COUNT.—There is established in the Treasury (among the
11 accounts of the Library of Congress) a gift account for
12 the Project.

13 (c) DEDICATION OF FUNDS.—Notwithstanding any
14 other provision of law—

15 (1) any funds donated to the Librarian of Con-
16 gress to carry out the Project shall be deposited en-
17 tirely into the gift account established under sub-
18 section (b);

19 (2) the funds contained in such account shall be
20 available only to the extent and in the amounts pro-
21 vided in advance in appropriations Acts;

22 (3) the funds contained in such account shall be
23 used solely to carry out the Project; and

24 (4) the Librarian of Congress may not deposit
25 into such account any funds donated to the Librar-

1 ian which are not donated for the exclusive purpose
2 of carrying out the Project.

3 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

4 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
5 this Act—

6 (1) \$250,000 for fiscal year 2023; and

7 (2) such sums as may be necessary for each
8 succeeding fiscal year, except that no funds are au-
9 thorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act for
10 any fiscal year which begins after the expiration of
11 the 3-year period beginning on the date of the termi-
12 nation of the declaration of the public health emer-
13 gency declared by the Secretary of Health and
14 Human Services pursuant to section 319 of the Pub-
15 lic Health Service Act on January 31, 2020, entitled
16 “Determination that a Public Health Emergency
17 Exists Nationwide as the Result of the 2019 Novel
18 Coronavirus”.

19 **SEC. 6. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

20 The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of
21 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,
22 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement
23 titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this
24 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record
25 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-

- 1 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the
- 2 vote on passage.

Passed the House of Representatives March 29,
2022.

Attest:

Clerk.

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