

2021 -- H 6002

LC002131

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

J O I N T R E S O L U T I O N

CREATING A SPECIAL COMMISSION TO BE KNOWN AS "THE RHODE ISLAND SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL (RI 250TH) COMMISSION"

Introduced By: Representatives Kennedy, Abney, McNamara, Azzinaro, Edwards, Solomon, Shanley, and Vella-Wilkinson

Date Introduced: February 26, 2021

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

(Secretary of State)

1 WHEREAS, As one of the original 13 colonies, Rhode Island played a leading role in the
2 birth and history of the United States of America; and

3 WHEREAS, On June 9, 1772, in the first major act of rebellion against England, Rhode
4 Islanders attacked and burned the English revenue schooner HMS Gaspee; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1774, Providence residents were the first to propose the idea of a
6 Continental Congress at their town meeting; and

7 WHEREAS, On May 4, 1776, Rhode Island's General Assembly passed the Act of
8 Renunciation, becoming the first British colony to renounce its allegiance to the King, an
9 important legislative step toward the Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776; and

10 WHEREAS, The 250th Anniversary of the founding of our country presents an
11 opportunity for Rhode Islanders and all Americans to reflect on the many significant events that
12 inspired the birth of our country from a diversity of perspectives; and

13 WHEREAS, The study of history leads to greater empathy, heightened civil discourse,
14 increased civic engagement, all of which build to a stronger future; now, therefore be it

15 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission to be known as "The Rhode Island
16 Semiquincentennial (RI 250) Commission" is hereby created consisting of thirty (30) members:
17 one of whom shall be the Secretary of State, or designee; one of whom shall be the Commissioner
18 of Elementary and Secondary Education, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive
19 Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, or designee; one

1 of whom shall be the Executive Director of the Rhode Island State Council for the Arts, or
2 designee; one of whom shall be the Secretary of the Executive Office of Commerce, or designee;
3 one of whom shall be the Historian Laureate, or designee; and twenty-four (24) of whom shall be
4 public members, four (4) of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House, two (2) of
5 whom shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the House, four (4) of whom shall be
6 appointed by the President of the Senate, two (2) of whom shall be appointed by the Minority
7 Leader of the Senate, six (6) of whom shall be appointed by the Governor, and six (6) of whom
8 shall be appointed by the Secretary of State.

9 The Secretary of State, or designee, shall serve as the Chairperson and the Executive
10 Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission shall serve as the
11 Vice-Chairperson of the Commission.

12 The public members shall be residents of this state, chosen with due regard to geographic,
13 cultural and racial diversity, who have an interest in the history of Rhode Island, over the last 250
14 years, and the contributions of Rhode Island in the founding of our nation.

15 The purpose of said Commission shall be to:

- 16 • Assist in ensuring that any observance of the semiquincentennial of the American
17 Revolution is inclusive and appropriately recognizes the experiences and points of view
18 of all people affected by the events before, during, and after this historic event;
- 19 • Encourage civic, historical, educational, economic, and other organizations throughout
20 the State of Rhode Island to organize and participate in activities to expand the
21 understanding, and appreciation of, the significance of the American Revolution;
- 22 • Collaborate with local tourism agencies to promote Rhode Island as a prominent cultural
23 and heritage tourism destination for American Revolutionary history;
- 24 • Encourage interdisciplinary and scholarly examination of the American Revolution; and
- 25 • Explore the many ways in which the ethos of our national founding period influences
26 our present, and can shape our future.

27 The duties of said Commission shall be to:

- 28 • Commemorate the semiquincentennial of the American Revolution and Rhode Island's
29 participation and contributions therein, including activities in recognition of the historic,
30 social, legal, cultural, and political forces that caused the American Revolution and
31 influenced its course and outcomes;
- 32 • Collaborate with and assist other state and national organizations with programs and
33 activities for the observance of the semiquincentennial of the American Revolution in
34 the State of Rhode Island;

- 1 • Facilitate American Revolution-related activities throughout the State of Rhode Island;
- 2 • Provide assistance to localities and nonprofit organizations for the development of
- 3 programs, projects, and activities pertaining to the American Revolution that have
- 4 lasting educational value within the State of Rhode Island; and
- 5 • Support the creation of educational opportunities for K-12 students and all members of
- 6 the public who wish to explore the intricacies of the foundational period of our nation.

7 Appointments to the Commission shall be made within sixty (60) days of the passage of

8 this resolution. The members of the Commission shall meet no later than sixty (60) days after the

9 completion of all appointments to the Commission.

10 A majority of members shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may hold

11 meetings. The Commission shall act only on an affirmative vote of a majority of the voting

12 members of the Commission.

13 Vacancies in said Commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

14 The membership of said Commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

15 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,

16 documentary and otherwise, to said Commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or

17 desirable by the Commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

18 The Commission may, for the purpose of carrying out its duties:

- 19 • Perform any and all other activities in connection with the educational, charitable and
- 20 scientific purposes of the Commission within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the
- 21 Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended;
- 22 • Solicit, accept and use grants and charitable funds made available by the United States
- 23 government or any agency thereof;
- 24 • Work in conjunction with other 501(c)(3) and nonprofit organizations with a similar
- 25 mission to solicit, accept and use funds or in-kind contributions from private entities;
- 26 • Request funds from the General Assembly;
- 27 • Appoint any advisory or sub-committee as the Commission considers appropriate; and
- 28 • Authorize any voting member or employee of the Commission to take any action that
- 29 the Commission is authorized to take under duties and purpose of the Commission; and
- 30 be it further

31 RESOLVED, That the Commission shall issue a final report that contains a summary of

32 the findings and recommendations of the Commission to the General Assembly on or before July

33 1, 2023, a final accounting of funds received and expended by the Commission to the General

1 Assembly on or before October 1, 2026, and said Commission shall expire on January 1, 2027.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL COMMISSION TO BE KNOWN AS "THE RHODE ISLAND
SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL (RI 250TH) COMMISSION"

1 This resolution would create a thirty (30) member special joint commission to be known
2 as The Rhode Island Semiquincentennial Commission whose purpose it would be to assist in the
3 observance of the Semiquincentennial and who would report back its findings and
4 recommendations to the General Assembly on or before July 1, 2023, and produce a final
5 accounting of funds received and expended to the General Assembly on or before October 1,
6 2026, and said Commission would expire on January 1, 2027.

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