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**HOUSE BILL 2134**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Young, DeBolt, Shea, Ortiz-Self, Entenman, Pettigrew, McCaslin, Ryu, and Walen

AN ACT Relating to commemorating Washington state founding father George Washington Bush through art in the internal southern portico of the legislative building; creating new sections; making an appropriation; providing an expiration date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature recognizes and honors historical persons who have shaped Washington's cultural identity; it is important that the state's full history and heritage is proudly displayed, honored, and esteemed. The legislature therefore recognizes one of the state's earliest pioneers and foremost founding fathers, an American hero of Irish and African descent who pioneered settlement of the Pacific Northwest, Mr. George Washington Bush.

George Washington Bush was an American military veteran who served his country in the battle of New Orleans in 1815. He was later a renowned frontiersman for the hudson bay company in what at the time was known as the Oregon country in the Pacific Northwest. He is the only veteran of the war of 1812 buried in Thurston county.

In 1844, Bush set out from Missouri on a wagon train destined for the Pacific Northwest with his family and other settlers seeking American prosperity and liberty. Upon concluding his trek along the Oregon trail, to avoid discriminatory exclusion and antiblack "lash laws" in Oregon, Bush crossed the Columbia river into territory claimed by both the United States and Great Britain. Bush became one of the first black landowners in the Washington territory, where he operated the most productive homestead and farm in the area, Bush prairie. This homestead served as the first nonnative American settlement in the territory, later known as Tumwater, and played a major role in establishing Olympia as the future capital of this state. Furthermore, Bush grew and operated it in such an enterprising and charitable way, which the legislature intends to note, distinguish, and edify, so as to prove vital and foundational to the United States' successfully claiming Washington as part of its territory.

Bush's son, William, was also significant to the political heritage of this state. In addition to continuing his father's charitable running of Bush prairie, William Owen Bush was elected to the first state legislature in 1889 to represent Thurston county. Most notably, William introduced the bill that established Washington State University in March 1890.

George Washington Bush pioneered notions and actions of racial unity and laid the foundation for racial equality in our state of Washington. He was a man of great Christian ethic and character in the face of discrimination and prejudice, and he lived this out through a demonstration of grace by which every Washington state citizen can be proud. Bypassing numerous opportunities to enrich himself, George Washington Bush welcomed all and unselfishly gave provision and shelter to any who sought his help. His actions, the legislature finds, directly led to greater American settlement in the area, as word spread of his generosity and welcoming nature. The legislature further finds that Bush's actions and reputation were a beacon for those looking to leave behind racial discrimination and bigotry and thus played the preeminent role in strengthening America's claim to the territory northwest of the Columbia river in subsequent negotiations with Great Britain.

It is therefore the legislature's intent to recognize Mr. George Washington Bush through art and a bust displayed in the south portico of the legislative building on the capitol campus.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1)(a) A task force on commemorating George Washington Bush through art is established, with members as provided in this subsection.

(i) The president of the senate shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses in the senate.

(ii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives.

(iii) The four legislative members jointly shall appoint one member representing the Washington state arts commission.

(b) The task force shall choose its chair from among its legislative membership. The chair shall convene the initial meeting of the task force.

(2) The task force shall:

(a) Develop criteria for the Washington state arts commission to select a bust of George Washington Bush and six pieces of art, either preexisting or commissioned for this purpose, to paint or permanently place on display in the open spaces of the south portico of the legislative building, within the following constraints:

(i) The center-left image must be of George Washington Bush;

(ii) The center-right image must be of his son, William Owen Bush;

(iii) The far-left image must be of the pioneer and founder of Centralia, George Washington, with his Centralia homestead; and

(iv) The total cost for the bust and the six pieces of art, and their installation, may not exceed two hundred fifty thousand dollars; and

(b) Consider whether the state should commission a statue of George Washington Bush for display in the national statuary hall collection in Washington, D.C.

(3) Staff support for the task force shall be provided by the Washington state arts commission.

(4) Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer, governmental entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter 43.03 RCW.

(5) The expenses of the task force shall be paid jointly by the senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee and the house executive rules committee, or their successor committees.

(6) The task force shall report its recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature by August 31, 2019.

(7) This section expires November 1, 2019.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The sum of two hundred fifty thousand dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, from the general fund to the Washington state arts commission for the purposes of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately.

**--- END ---**