

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5756

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As Passed Senate, February 2, 2022

**Title:** An act relating to establishing the semiquincentennial committee.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the semiquincentennial committee.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Hunt, Muzzall and Conway; by request of Lieutenant Governor, Washington State Historical Society).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government & Elections: 1/21/22, 1/26/22 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:** Passed Senate: 2/2/22, 47-0.

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

- Establishes a Semiquincentennial Committee to coordinate and provide guidance for Washington's official observance of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5756 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Hasegawa and Hawkins.

**Staff:** Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

**Background:** The Second Continental Congress, a meeting of delegates from the thirteen colonies, voted for the independence of the United States on July 2, 1776, in Philadelphia. The Declaration of Independence was approved by Congress on July 4, the date on which

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the anniversary of independence is observed.

Congress enacted the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 to establish a commission to plan, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of United States history leading up to the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States on July 4, 2026, as marked by the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The legislation specifically directs the organization of events in locations of historical significance to the United States.

**Summary of First Substitute Bill:** The Semiquincentennial Committee (Committee) of 20 members is established to coordinate and provide guidance for Washington's official observance of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, as marked by the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The Lieutenant Governor will serve as the chair of the Committee. The Washington State Historical Society (WSHS) will provide administrative support to the Committee. The WSHS may employ personnel, contract for services, and receive, expend, and allocate gifts, grants, and donations on behalf of the Committee.

The Semiquincentennial Account is created. The account is subject to allotment procedures, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures. The Lieutenant Governor and the director of the WSHS may authorize expenditures from the account.

Committee Members. The Committee will include the following members:

- one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- the Lieutenant Governor, or their designee;
- the Secretary of State, or their designee;
- the Superintendent of Public Instruction, or their designee;
- the director, or their designee, for the following agencies: Governor's Office of Indian Affairs; WSHS; Eastern Washington State Historical Society; Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation; Washington State Parks; Department of Commerce; and Washington State Arts Commission;
- one member selected by each of the following: the Commission on African American Affairs; the Commission on Asian American Affairs; the Commission on Hispanic Affairs; the LGBTQ Commission; and the Women's Commission; and
- one member representing Humanities Washington, appointed by the Governor.

The Committee may invite additional persons necessary to serve as honorary members.

Committee Duties. The Committee must submit a yearly report of its activities to the Legislature. The Committee may:

- cooperate with national, regional, statewide, and local entities promoting the semiquincentennial;
- assist, plan, or conduct semiquincentennial events;
- support, plan, or produce educational resources and programs related to the semiquincentennial;
- engage in or encourage fundraising activities including revenue-generating enterprises, as well as the solicitation of charitable gifts, grants, or donations;
- coordinate interagency participation in the observance;
- create subcommittees comprised of committee members, honorary members, and community members to further the goals of the Committee; and
- perform other related duties.

The act expires June 30, 2027.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** Yes.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute:** PRO: The bill set up an infrastructure for the state to participate in the 250th anniversary of the United States. Twenty-one other states have already done this, five are working on doing this and others will follow shortly. This has been done in the past. We prefer calling this event USA 250 which is easier to say than semiquincentennial. The Historical Society has the infrastructure to successfully undertake this. The statute already tasks the society with leading statewide commemorations such as this and we are excited for this opportunity. The goal of the United States commission on the semiquincentennial is that the shared experiences of USA250 will have ignited our imaginations, elevated our diverse stories, and demonstrated the lasting durability of the American project. Establishing this committee will help us connect with the national efforts and funding that may be available. The obligation of the committee is to work with groups across Washington to make sure that this is truly a statewide observation. This is a wonderful opportunity to focus on our shared values and the urgent conversation on where progress has been made and still needs to be made. This will also promote civic education in our country.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Denny Heck, Lieutenant Governor; Jennifer Kilmer, Washington State Historical Society.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.