



U.S. SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMISSION

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

December 15, 2020



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Chairman	1
Commissioners	2
Report to Congress	
America 250	3
Inspiring the American Spirit	3
First Steps	4
Organization & Duties of the Commission	4
Planning & Programs	5
Interaction with Federal Departments & Agencies	6
Interaction with the States & Territories, & Indian Nations	7
Integration of America 250 Programs with Foreign Countries & Other International Entities	7
Staffing & Budgets of the Commission & its Federal Appropriations	7
Fiscal Accountability	8
Development & Private Fundraising	8
The Technical Amendment to Public Law 114-196	9
Future Plans	9
Attachments	
Public Law 114-196	
Executive Summary – Commission’s Report to the President of the United States	



U.S. SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMISSION

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am pleased to provide you with the First Annual Report to Congress of the activities of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, pursuant to Public Law 114-196, Section 9(d).

The U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission was created by Congress to orchestrate the largest and most inclusive anniversary observance of our Nation's history. More than just a moment of celebration, the Semiquincentennial (under the brand name America 250) is a commemorative season that is inspiring the American spirit within all Americans and each American, grounded in our nation's founding principles, for our continuing journey toward a more perfect Union.

We are pleased and appreciative that the Congress has chosen to approve Federal appropriations for the Commission, as we continue to build our own capacity in our corporate and private fundraising efforts. On behalf of all our Commissioners, I hope that you find this report helpful as you review continued Federal funding as we plan initiatives and programs leading up to July 4, 2026 and beyond.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this report, please direct them to me or the Executive Director of the Commission, Frank Giordano, at fgiordano@America250.gov.



Sincerely,

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COMMISSIONERS

As signed into Public Law by the President as P.L. 114-196, Section 4, the Congress has appointed 16 private citizens as Commissioners to the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission (“the Commission”), along with four U.S Representatives and four U.S. Senators – all equally selected by the leadership of the two political parties. The President of the United States selects the Chairman, among the sixteen private citizen Commissioners. Non-voting Members of the Commission include the heads of several Departments and Agencies.

Members of the Commission:

Senator Robert Casey, Jr. of Pennsylvania
Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas
Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire
Senator Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania
Representative Robert Aderholt of Alabama
Representative Dwight Evans of Pennsylvania
Representative George Holding of North Carolina
Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman of New Jersey
Robert A. Brady of Pennsylvania
David L. Cohen of Pennsylvania
Val Crofts of Wisconsin
Daniel M. DiLella of Pennsylvania (Chairman)
Cathy Gillespie of Virginia
Noah Griffin of California
Amy Gutmann, Ph.D. of Pennsylvania
Andrew Hohns, Ph.D. of Pennsylvania
Jim Koch of Massachusetts
Lucas Morel, Ph.D. of Virginia
Wilfred M. McClay, Ph.D. of Oklahoma
Rosie Rios of California
James L. Swanson of Washington, D.C.
Richard Trumka of Maryland
Thomas Walker, Jr. of Alabama
Lynn Forney Young of Texas

Ex-Officio Members:

The Secretary of the Interior
The Secretary of State
The Attorney General
The Secretary of Defense
The Secretary of Education
The Librarian of Congress
The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution
The Archivist of the United States
The presiding officer of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities

Executive Director:

Frank Giordano of New Jersey

**REPORT TO CONGRESS:
December 2020**

I. AMERICA 250

Pursuant to Section 9 of the Public Law, the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior sought Requests for Proposal to select the Administrative Secretariat for the Commission through a competitive process. On May 4, 2018, the American Battlefield Trust was selected. Subsequently, and to further assist the Commission in its mission, the America 250 Foundation, Inc. was created to provide a directly linked and unparalleled co-branded partnership. On July 16, 2020, the Internal Revenue Service recognized the America 250 Foundation as a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization, and as a Type II – 509(a)(3) supporting organization of the Commission under the Internal Revenue Code.

Today, the Administrative Secretariat continues to play an important role in both the Commission and Foundation affairs. The term “America 250” is used when referring to the activities in the planning of the 250th anniversary by the Administrative Secretariat, the Commission, and the Foundation. As mandated, a [Report to the President](#) was submitted in December 2019. This 268-page Report outlines the plans for a six-year celebration that has already begun, and will culminate on July 4, 2026, leaving a legacy for future generations of Americans. The Executive Summary, which includes specific recommendations for timely executive and Congressional action to implement the overall program presented, has been attached to this first Report to the Congress, along with the Public Law which created the Commission.

II. INSPIRING THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

The U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and its supporting Foundation are nonpartisan, non-political entities. In planning this celebration and commemoration, America 250 will inspire the American spirit in all Americans and each American, as we demonstrate our commitment to be broadly inclusive in our nation’s diverse communities while providing unique experiences of every individual in our country.

On this 250th anniversary, America 250 is grounded in our Nation’s founding principles which are the bedrock of our Democratic Republic. We seek to continue in our journey to align the American experience with the promise of these principles to form a more perfect Union that secures liberty and justice for all.

During the last two years, after dozens of strategic planning sessions with Commissioners, and outreach to hundreds of stakeholders, America 250 created a visionary framework embracing three common themes—Educate, Engage, and Unite—that serve as goals to achieve our purpose of inspiring the American spirit and prompts for participation. All activities, and the tens of thousands of programs that

will be planned, contribute to the fulfillment of America 250's purpose of embracing these broad aspirational objectives.

No doubt America 250 will draw inspiration from, and attention to, the history of the Revolutionary Era. But America's story did not begin or end with the Revolution. It is a rich tapestry, woven with threads of our Nation. Geographically, the scope of America 250 includes the entire United States, its States and Territories, Native American Nations within its borders, and countries around the globe. We seek to reach all Americans, each American, and friends of America.

America 250 is not just a moment six years in the future focused on July 4, 2026. Instead, it is a commemorative season that has already begun and will run through 2027 when the Commission sunsets its activities – although it is our greatest hope that several programs will continue beyond the Commission's statutory lifecycle to leave a social impact legacy.

III. FIRST STEPS

Once selected as the Administrative Secretariat, the American Battlefield Trust moved forward accepting the responsibilities for organizing and managing the Commission's activities and putting together the first meeting of the Commission which was held in Philadelphia on November 15th and 16th, 2018. Since then, the Commission has convened 8 official meetings and other working sessions in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., both in person and by video conference. The Administrative Secretariat continues in its supportive role led by Jim Campi, Chief Policy and Communications Officer, who has worked tirelessly on a pro bono basis since day one to bring the collective America 250 concept together and positioned for success. In addition, there have been roughly 60 meetings of America 250 Committees and Task Forces. Through the use of the stakeholder groups and through the use of listening sessions, America 250 has interacted with over 100 organizations.

IV. ORGANIZATION & DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION

In an effort to create a sound organizational structure to implement the mandates of the Public Law, a Commission Executive Committee was formed and meets monthly. In addition, the Commission created six Committees – Audit and Finance, Development, Governance, Government Relations, Marketing and Communications, and Planning and Program Development. The America 250 Foundation subsequently formed three Committees – Audit and Finance, Executive, and Social Responsibility. Anthony J. Rucci, Professor Emeritus from Ohio State University, is the President and CEO of the Foundation. Scott Hommel, a Marine Veteran and former Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of the Interior is the Chief Operating Officer of the Foundation.

America 250 initially has created eight Advisory Task Forces charged with suggesting "moonshot" programs to be sponsored by the Commission. These Task

Forces include: Art, Culture, Sports & Entertainment; Civics & Civic Engagement; History & Education; Innovation, Science & Entrepreneurism; International; Parks, Preservation & Public Places; Veterans; and Youth. As we approach the anniversary, (funding and staff support permitting) we expect that more Advisory Task Forces will be created and some of the current Task Forces may create subcommittees to focus on specific domains. Through these Advisory Task Forces, the Commission is expanding its reach and inviting experts from various sectors across America to partner in building out the design of America 250 and ultimately reach tens of thousands of stakeholders and hundreds of millions of participants through a once-in-a-lifetime America 250 experience.

V. PLANNING & PROGRAMS

As the Commission builds momentum towards the 250th commemoration, we have established a digital presence on social media (via the platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), and we continue to build a robust, interactive website at www.America250.org. As the website evolves, it will serve as a brand center for America 250, a program clearinghouse, a soon to be activated online store, and other elements that will be tied to national signature programs and events. Using this virtual base in the midst of pandemic, we highlighted such events as July 4th celebrations, Constitution Day, the Women's Suffrage Centennial, the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and most recently a November salute to military service. To build broader awareness of America 250, we promoted these and other Commission activities with a growing communications and public relations effort. We also modeled an educational program with an online Constitution Quiz and promoted educational programs available through our Federal and nonprofit partners.

America 250 has embarked on ambitious efforts to develop national signature programs; 200 early ideas have been narrowed down to about a dozen which are being considered now by the Commission. These will be national in scope with some designed to catalyze growing participation beginning in 2021 and others requiring a long arc of planning to prepare for the 2026 activation. One such national signature program pursuant to Public Law 114-196, Section 7(f)(1), America 250 will create a time capsule to be buried at Independence Hall and opened on the 500th anniversary on July 4, 2276.

In addition to distinctive national signature programs, the Commission's approach will inspire grassroots programming across the nation. America 250 expects to officially recognize tens of thousands of non-commercial programs and activities of public and nonprofit organizations as expressions of the America 250 vision. To acknowledge this recognition and connect these diverse programs in a cohesive commemoration, the Commission will grant a limited license to government and nonprofit entities to use brand assets incorporating the Commission's official marks. At present, America 250 has begun the process of officially recognizing a few pilot programs, and over the next few months, will begin operating a systematic application and review process for official recognition to permit the free use of

America 250's licensed marks. Similar to existing Public Law, the Commission has applied for a registered trademark "America 250" with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. (Serial Number 88638123 -

<http://tmsearch.uspto.gov/bin/showfield?f=doc&state=4810:6p5yaq.3.1>)

To further outreach and raise awareness among key stakeholder communities, in 2020, America 250 conducted three on-line listening sessions with over 300 history and education professionals, State and Territorial officials, and State tourism officials. As the planning of the 250th anniversary progresses, several more listening sessions are expected to take place, covering several areas of our nation's history.

VI. INTERACTION WITH FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

Public Law 114-196, Section 6 states that Federal agencies shall cooperate with the Commission in planning, encouraging, developing, and coordinating appropriate commemorative activities. The Public Law, along with the designation of several Federal *ex officio* non-voting Members, mandated several activities. Section 4(b)(4) requires the Commission "to consult and cooperate with and seek advice and assistance from appropriate Federal agencies." Section 6(b) requires specific cooperative actions with named agencies, including the Department of the Interior, the State Department, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Section 6(b)(4) of the Public Law, requires the Department of State become the point of contact for outreach to foreign nations, a role which America 250 has been supporting in coordination with the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. In addition, discussions have already occurred with the U.S. Mint to consider appropriate coinage, including medallions and commemorative coins to recognize the 250th anniversary.

Since the Commission's first meeting in November 2018, America 250 has established communication and coordination with the individual *ex officio* agencies and routinely convenes a working group of designated *ex officio* representatives. This working group has also organized subgroups of agency public affairs officials to coordinate communications and legal counsels to establish formal interagency cooperation. Additional subgroups are in the early stages of discussing coordinated federal outreach to tribal groups and Indian Nations regarding America 250. America 250 is expanding its outreach to other Federal entities, and anticipates that more than 200 Federal Departments, Agencies, and quasi-governmental entities will eventually develop America 250 programs on their own or in collaboration with the Commission.

VII. INTERACTION WITH THE STATES & TERRITORIES, & INDIAN NATIONS

To increase America 250's involvement with the States and Territories, the four U.S. Senators and four U.S. Representatives established the Congressional America 250 Caucus, each serving as a co-chair. As of the time of this Report, every State and Territory Governor's office has been contacted multiple times to introduce the America 250 plan and encourage the creation of official state or territory America 250 organizations to collaborate with the Commission on this nationwide initiative. In addition, about 275 letters have been sent to legislative leaders in every State and Territory. Almost 900 emails and phone calls have been made, with the goal of having America 250 entities in every State and Territory. In accordance with Section 5(b), outreach continues to the 13 original colonies and the referenced key cities. As of December 1, 2020, Semiquincentennial entities have been created in eight (8) states: Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia; legislation has been introduced in three (3) additional states: Alabama, New York, and Massachusetts; and significant interest has been expressed in the seven (7) following states and territory: Delaware, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

There have been several America 250 staff contacts with Native American leaders and groups to begin developing the most appropriate approach for engaging the 574 sovereign, federally-recognized Native American, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian tribes or entities in America 250. This outreach respects the exceptional place Native Americans occupy in the nation's past, present, and future, and is a significant dimension of the Commission's broader commitment to give voice to each and every American.

VIII. INTEGRATION OF AMERICA 250 PROGRAMS WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES & OTHER INTERNATIONAL ENTITIES

Pursuant to Public Law 114-196, the Commission is collaborating with the Department of State to support its efforts to engage foreign nations in America 250. The Chair of the International Task Force of America 250 is a former U.S. Representative and prior Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee. The State Department aims to involve more than one hundred foreign nations in the commemoration.

IX. STAFFING & BUDGETS OF THE COMMISSION & ITS FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Public Law, the Congress was generous to provide \$500,000 in Federal funding for (FY) 2019 for the Commission. This amount was increased to an appropriation of \$3.3 million in FY 2020. For FY 2021, we are currently working with House and Senate Appropriators for \$8 million. The Commission is on record of needing a no-year Federal funding baseline of \$8 million

a year through FY 2026 to fully realize and discharge its mandate given by Congress. Federal funding will represent roughly 15-20% of the anticipated funding requirements of America 250 through 2026.

Pursuant to Public Law 114-196, Section 8(d), the Commission is permitted to seek detailed employees from other Departments and Agencies. At present, the Commission has one detailed employee from the National Park Service, and a future employee is expected to be detailed from the General Service Administration. In addition, the Commission's Executive Committee is working closely with the *ex officio* Members, for additional non-reimbursable Federal employees. This provision of the Public Law provides an additional way to help defray costs. Currently, the Commission has three Federal employees which includes the Executive Director. The Commission is managed by the Foundation through a Master Services Agreement which has hired its own staff.

The Foundation and Commission are committed to diversity and inclusiveness in the hiring of all staff, and in the contracting of outside consultants. To ensure these efforts of inclusion, it was imperative the America 250 Foundation establish a Social Responsibility Committee to oversee all activities, programs, and practices of America 250.

X. FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

To maintain the highest standards of fiscal accountability and good finance practices, the Chair of both the Audit and Finance Committee of the Commission and the Audit and Finance Committee of the Foundation, is the Honorable Rosa Gumataotao Rios, a Commissioner who previously served as a distinguished Treasurer of the United States. Our non-salaried Commissioners, as required by Section 8(a) of the Public Law, are committed to the highest standards of government ethics, to ensure that any Federal funds appropriated are spent productively.

In addition, in an effort to control costs, some individuals and firms involved in planning, fundraising, employee management, design of the Commission's licensed marks, and other activities have initially provided pro bono, or services at a reduced rate. Troutman, Pepper Hamilton Sanders, LLP, the General Counsel representing the Commission; and Reed Smith, LLP, the General Counsel representing the America 250 Foundation have provided their services at no charge.

XI. DEVELOPMENT & PRIVATE FUNDRAISING

Consistent with the legislative intent of Public Law 114-196, Section 9(a), America 250 expects significant fundraising from private and corporate sources – ultimately in order to cover an overall projected cost of \$300 to \$500 million. Currently, America 250 is negotiating with several major American corporations to become national corporate sponsors at a multi-million-dollar level over the next six years. This designation will give these commercial entities several exclusive uses of the licensed

marks of the Commission and enable them to have the right of first refusal to sponsor activations of our national signature programs.

In addition, the America 250 Foundation will soon have a donation “button” on our website to seek individual private citizen contributions. We will soon be marketing America 250 brand merchandise. Working with our Congressional Commissioners, the U.S. Mint, and the United States Postal Service, we expect to raise additional revenues with the U.S. Treasury through the sale of commemorative coinage and medals, and commemorative stamps.

XII. THE TECHNICAL AMENDMENT TO PUBLIC LAW 114-196

On July 21, 2020, the Senate approved a bill which would make minor corrections to the Public Law which created the Commission. The legislation added a few important *ex officio* Members that were inadvertently omitted from the original legislation – the U.S. Supreme Court, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Also, the bill authorizes the Congress to allow for Federal appropriations. At the time of the writing of this Report, this legislation is now pending in the House of Representatives.

XIII. FUTURE PLANS

We trust that this First Annual Report to Congress, along with the previously submitted Report to the President, presents a clear and ambitious vision for America 250, and summarizes our initial steps to realize that vision. Depending on corporate and private individual fundraising, as well as the thoughtful and continued support of Congress, America 250 will pursue its expansive approach to this celebration and commemoration. This will be a part of America 250’s outreach, and our planning and programs that will result in a celebration unprecedented in our Nation’s history. America 250 has the desire to involve hundreds of millions of Americans as we embrace the principles of our Founders and strive toward a more perfect Union for all of our people.

ATTACHMENTS

- I. PUBLIC LAW 114-196**
- II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – COMMISSION’S REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**