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AB-795 California Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial. (2025-2026)

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AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 01, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 795

Introduced by Assembly Member Jeff Gonzalez

February 18, 2025

An act to add and repeal Chapter 7.5 (commencing with Section 6750) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, relating to the California Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 795, as amended, Jeff Gonzalez. California Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial.

Existing law establishes various commissions within state government, including the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, which is required to act as an information center on issues that affect the lives of women and girls. Existing law requires the Governor to proclaim various days as holidays and days of remembrance.

This bill would, until January 1, 2029, establish the California Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial, with membership as prescribed, to plan and coordinate commemorations and observances of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution. The bill would charge the commission with various responsibilities in this regard, including developing and promoting educational programs, community events, and public exhibits commemorating the semiquincentennial. The bill would require that the commission operate as an independent advisory body supported entirely by private funding and in-kind contributions, and would establish the Semiquincentennial ~~Fund~~ *Fund, held by the Treasurer*, to receive private contributions and federal grants, which the bill would make available for the commission's activities upon appropriation. The bill would prohibit the commission from transacting any business or exercising its powers until the ~~Treasurer~~ *Controller* has certified that there are sufficient funds in the Semiquincentennial Fund available to support the commission's activities without requiring state financial resources. If the ~~Treasurer~~ *Controller* determines that sufficient funds are not available by February 1, 2026, the bill would require that the commission be dissolved and that any remaining funds in the Semiquincentennial Fund be returned to contributors on a pro rata ~~basis~~ *basis, as specified*. By authorizing the expenditure of these funds for return to contributors under certain circumstances, the bill would make an appropriation. The bill would require the records, files, and other memoranda of the commission, other than any private possessions, to be deposited and filed with the State Archives on or before December 31, 2028.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States of America.
- (b) This milestone provides an opportunity to reflect on the foundational principles of liberty, equality, and democracy that underpin the American experience.
- (c) California has a unique and diverse history that has significantly contributed to the cultural, economic, and social fabric of the United States.
- (d) The United States Semiquincentennial Commission has encouraged each state to establish a state-level commission to coordinate activities celebrating this historic anniversary.
- (e) This celebration should reflect the unity, ingenuity, and resilience of the American people.
- (f) Given California's ongoing budget constraints and recent crises, any state-led effort must minimize fiscal impacts while maximizing private sector support and public engagement. *To that end, the commission's funding shall be held by the Treasurer, with certification of sufficiency and fiscal oversight conducted by the Controller to ensure transparency and independence.*
- (g) Any state-led effort should understand and appreciate the complexities of a statewide and nationwide coordination, possess a deep appreciation for the historical significance of the occasion, and inspire collaboration across party lines and diverse communities.
- (h) California has less than one year to lay the groundwork for an unparalleled celebration of American ingenuity, diversity, and resilience. This effort is not merely about commemorating history—it is about creating a legacy for future generations to cherish.

SEC. 2. Chapter 7.5 (commencing with Section 6750) is added to Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, to read:

CHAPTER 7.5. California Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial

6750. (a) The California Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial, hereafter referred to in this chapter as "the commission," is hereby established to plan and coordinate commemorations and observances of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution.

(b) The commission shall operate as an independent advisory body supported entirely by private funding and in-kind contributions, with no direct fiscal impact on the General Fund.

6751. (a) The commission shall consist of 16 members as follows:

- (1) The State Archivist, who shall serve as chairperson.
- (2) Two ~~members~~ *Members* of the Assembly, appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.
- (3) Two ~~members~~ *Members* of the Senate, appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules.
- (4) Two members of the general public with experience in historical or cultural programming, appointed by the Governor.
- (5) Two members of the general public representing private sector sponsors, appointed by the State Archivist.
- (6) Two members of the general public representing California nonprofit organizations or community groups involved in cultural heritage or historical education, appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Committee on Rules, respectively.
- (7) Five members who shall be appointed by majority vote of the members appointed to the commission pursuant to ~~paragraph~~ *paragraphs* (1) through (6), inclusive, whose primary responsibility shall be to raise the requisite funds for the commission.

(b) Members shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties provided that those reimbursements are funded through private donations.

6752. (a) Subject to Section 6754, the commission shall have the following responsibilities:

(1) Develop and promote educational programs, community events, and public exhibits commemorating the semiquincentennial.

(2) Facilitate partnerships with private entities, nonprofits, and local governments to support activities statewide.

(3) Seek private and federal funding to finance its operations, including donations, ~~grants~~ *grants*, and sponsorships.

(4) Submit an annual report to the Legislature detailing activities, expenditures, and funding sources.

(b) The commission shall establish an online portal to ensure transparency and encourage public participation.

6753. (a) The Semiquincentennial Fund is hereby created in the State Treasury to receive private contributions and federal grants. Funds in the Semiquincentennial Fund shall be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, solely for the commission's activities.

(b) The Treasurer shall hold the Semiquincentennial Fund.

~~(b)~~

*(c) The ~~State Treasurer~~ *Controller* shall oversee the ~~Semiquincentennial Fund's management, ensuring compliance with all laws and transparency requirements.~~ *fund's fiscal management and compliance with applicable laws and transparency requirements.**

6754. (a) The commission shall not transact any business or exercise its powers until the ~~Treasurer~~ *Controller* has certified that there are sufficient funds in the Semiquincentennial Fund ~~available~~ to support the commission's activities without requiring state financial resources.

(b) If the ~~Treasurer~~ *Controller* determines that sufficient funds are not available by February 1, 2026, the commission shall ~~dissolve~~ *be dissolved*, and any remaining funds in the Semiquincentennial Fund shall be returned to ~~contributors~~ *contributors*, on a pro rata ~~basis~~ *basis, under procedures developed by the Controller in consultation with the Treasurer.*

6755. (a) On or before December 31, 2028, the ~~Commission~~ *commission* shall transfer all records, files, and other historical materials to the State Archives for permanent preservation.

(b) This chapter shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2029, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute deletes or extends that date.