

District of Columbia Legislation

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

A RESOLUTION

25-95

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 4, 2023

To declare the sense of the Council that the Mayor should, in consultation with the Council, establish a commission to plan for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding and that in its planning the commission should embrace the complete history of the District and amplify the fight for statehood.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Sense of the Council on the Establishment of an America250 Commission Resolution of 2023".

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) On July 4, 2026, the United States and the District will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the nation (known as the "Semiquincentennial") as marked by the ratification of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The Declaration of Independence and the historic events preceding its signing have had a profound influence throughout the world.

(2) The ideals articulated in the Declaration of Independence—that all people are created equal and that government derives its power from the consent of the governed—are especially meaningful to the residents of the District, who still lack representation in the United States Congress as well as full autonomy over their local affairs.

(3) To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the country's founding, tens of thousands of visitors will travel to the District. This presents the District with a unique opportunity to tell its complete story and to showcase that it is more than the seat of federal government but also a thriving and diverse city worthy of statehood.

(4) In 2016, Congress established the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission ("federal commission") to "provide for the observance and commemoration of the 250th anniversary . . . through local, State, national, and international activities."

(5) The federal commission's goal is that every state, territory, and the District form a state-level America250 commission by the end of 2023. Currently, 21 states have formed, or are in the process of forming, such commissions.

Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that:

(1) The Mayor should establish an America250 Commission (“Commission”) for the District of Columbia, composed of members appointed by both the Mayor and the Council;

(2) In leading the planning for the 250th anniversary, the Mayor should, in consultation with the Council, ensure that the Commission is attuned to the goal of strategically telling the District’s story to emphasize the history of the District and the nation;

(3) In its planning, the Commission should be directed to go beyond merely celebrating the 250th anniversary of the nation’s founding to, in addition, commemorating the entire history of the District—from the local cultural, social, and political leaders who have helped shape the nation’s history to the difficult histories of racism, slavery, and segregation central to the stories of both the District and the broader nation;

(4) To further this goal, the Commission should include:

(A) Experts on the history of Black culture, identity, and political power at the core of the movements for home rule and statehood in the District;

(B) Local historians, statehood advocates, and leaders in the arts, culture, and philanthropy;

(C) Representatives from the University of the District of Columbia, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the District of Columbia Archives;

(D) Representatives from District civic associations and Main Streets; and

(E) Representatives from Events DC, the New Columbia Statehood Commission, and the DC Public Library;

(5) In selecting the members of the Commission, the Mayor and Council should ensure that all 8 Wards are represented and that the Commission is reflective of diverse and historically marginalized voices from across the District; and

(6) The Mayor and the Council should prepare to adequately fund the commemoration of the 250th anniversary, and that the Mayor should include necessary funds for the Commission in her proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

Sec. 4. The Council shall transmit a copy of this resolution, upon its adoption, to the Mayor.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.