

By: Senator(s) Chassaniol

To: Tourism

SENATE BILL NO. 2139
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MISSISSIPPI USA SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL
2 COMMISSION TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS FOR OBSERVING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY
3 OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; TO AUTHORIZE COOPERATION WITH THE
4 UNITED STATES SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMISSION AND THE AMERICA250
5 FOUNDATION AND OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS; TO
6 DESIGNATE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION; TO PROVIDE FOR
7 THE MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION; TO PROVIDE FOR
8 REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES; TO PROHIBIT SOLICITATION OF FUNDS BY
9 MEMBERS WHO ARE ELECTED OFFICIALS OR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES; TO PROVIDE
10 FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND SECRETARY TO THE
11 COMMISSION; TO PROVIDE FOR ADVISORY COMMITTEES; TO ENCOURAGE THE
12 COOPERATION OF STATE AGENCIES AND POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS; TO
13 EMPOWER THE COMMISSION TO ACCEPT AND EXPEND FUNDS FROM PRIVATE AND
14 PUBLIC SOURCES FOR THIS CELEBRATION; TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI
15 SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL CELEBRATION FUND IN THE STATE TREASURY; TO
16 REQUIRE AN ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION TO THE GOVERNOR AND
17 LEGISLATURE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

18 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

19 **SECTION 1.** (1) The Legislature finds that:

20 (a) Public Law 114-196 established the United States
21 Semiquincentennial Commission and its nonprofit partner, the
22 America250 Foundation, to collaborate with affiliates at the
23 local, territorial, state, tribal, regional, national and
24 international levels to educate, engage and unite Americans
25 throughout a commemorative period beginning in 2020 to officially



26 conclude in 2027, culminating in the celebration of the 250th
27 Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on
28 July 4, 2026, and of the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the
29 United States of America;

30 (b) As of December 1, 2021, eighteen (18) states have
31 established organizations to support the America250 initiative by
32 planning and implementing programs that honor the history and
33 culture of the United States, including special events, public art
34 displays, museum exhibitions and educational curriculums, and the
35 United States Semiquincentennial Commission expects the widest
36 participation to occur through state and local projects and
37 events; and

38 (c) It is altogether appropriate during this
39 commemorative period to participate in a celebration of this
40 magnitude and salute our state heroes, groups, artists,
41 industries, agriculture, historic sites and other contributions to
42 the fabric and history of our nation.

43 (2) There is hereby created a Mississippi USA
44 Semiquincentennial Commission, hereinafter referred to as the
45 "commission," to plan, promote and implement appropriate public
46 celebrations and official events, programs and commemorations.

47 (3) The commission is authorized to cooperate with the
48 United States Semiquincentennial Commission and the America250
49 Foundation and other national and state organizations engaged in
50 commemoration and celebration of the semiquincentennial, and other



51 national, regional, state and local public and private
52 organizations with compatible purposes.

53 (4) The commission shall designate and coordinate events and
54 programs with respect to the formal semiquincentennial celebration
55 and commemoration and promote and encourage through those events,
56 programs, digital and printed media, symposia, and educational
57 outreach all of the following:

58 (a) Awareness and understanding of the principles of
59 the Declaration of Independence, of the winning of American
60 independence in the American Revolutionary War, and of the
61 establishment of America's system of constitutional
62 self-government;

63 (b) Teaching students and increasing public knowledge
64 and appreciation of the breadth of American history and the
65 centuries-long quest for "liberty and justice for all," to include
66 sharing the stories and contributions of the various people who
67 have populated the land, from indigenous peoples, explorers,
68 British colonists, seekers of religious freedom, enslaved African
69 Americans and many others who are part of America's stories;

70 (c) Advancing the cause of liberty and American
71 self-government and of the meaning of "E Pluribus Unum" ("from
72 many, one") through promoting civic knowledge and practice,
73 including America's "Charters of Freedom" (the Declaration of
74 Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights) and the



75 constitutional features of self-government emphasizing the roles
76 of active and engaged good citizens;

77 (d) Emphasizing the service and sacrifices of veterans
78 of all generations who have secured and preserved American
79 independence and freedom and encouraging Mississippians to honor
80 them; and

81 (e) Celebratory and commemorative events and activities
82 throughout the State of Mississippi and its eighty-two (82)
83 counties and its two hundred ninety-nine (299) incorporated
84 municipalities celebrating our state's arts, culture, sports,
85 entertainment, innovation, science, entrepreneurship, parks,
86 preservation and youth.

87 (5) The commission shall be composed of the following
88 members:

89 (a) The Governor's First Lady, or her designee;

90 (b) The Lieutenant Governor, or his designee;

91 (c) The Speaker of the House of Representatives, or his
92 designee;

93 (d) Three (3) members appointed by the Governor, one
94 (1) of whom shall be an indigenous person, to serve terms
95 concurrent with that of the Governor;

96 (e) Two (2) members appointed by the Lieutenant
97 Governor to serve terms concurrent with that of the Lieutenant
98 Governor;



99 (f) One (1) member appointed by the Speaker of the
100 House of Representatives to serve a term concurrent with that of
101 the Speaker;

102 (g) The Director of the Division of Tourism of the
103 Mississippi Development Authority, or his designee;

104 (h) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Tourism
105 Association, or her designee;

106 (i) The Director of the Mississippi Department of
107 Archives and History, or her designee; and

108 (j) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Arts
109 Commission, or his designee.

110 (6) Appointments shall be made within thirty (30) days after
111 the passage of this act by the Legislature, and the First Lady
112 shall serve as chairwoman for a term concurrent with the
113 gubernatorial term. Within fifteen (15) days thereafter, on a day
114 to be designated by the First Lady, the commission shall meet and
115 organize for business by adopting internal organizational
116 procedures necessary for the commission's efficient operation,
117 including officers, committees and subcommittees, quorum
118 requirements, and policies for any commission staff. Each member
119 of the commission shall designate necessary staff of his or her
120 respective agency, department or business entity, as the case may
121 be, to provide administrative support to assist the commission in
122 performing its duties and responsibilities. In the selection of
123 its officers and the adoption of rules, resolutions and reports,



124 an affirmative vote of a majority of the commission shall be
125 required. All members shall be notified in writing of all
126 meetings, such notices to be transmitted as appropriate at least
127 five (5) days before the date on which a meeting is to be held.
128 The commission shall meet and conduct business at least quarterly
129 each year. Commission meetings shall be open to the public, and
130 opportunity for public comment shall be made available.

131 (7) Commission members shall receive no compensation for
132 their services. No commission member may incur per diem, travel
133 or other expenses unless previously authorized by vote at a
134 meeting of the commission, which action shall be recorded in the
135 official minutes of the meeting. Legislative members of the
136 commission shall be paid from the contingent expense funds of
137 their respective houses in the same manner as provided for
138 committee meetings when the Legislature is not in session;
139 however, no per diem or expense for attending meetings of the
140 commission will be paid while the Legislature is in session.
141 Nonlegislative members shall be paid from any funds made available
142 for that purpose to the commission or their respective agencies,
143 departments or business entities.

144 (8) No elected public official or public employee serving on
145 the commission shall be involved in soliciting any private funds
146 or gifts for the commission.

147 (9) The First Lady, with concurrence of the commission, may
148 designate the chief executive officer of an agency or nonprofit



149 organization created or chartered by legislative act, or another
150 qualified individual, to serve as the executive officer and
151 secretary of the commission. The executive officer shall serve
152 without additional compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses
153 as provided for state employees. He or she shall exercise such
154 powers delegated by the commission, including the right to apply
155 for, receive, accept, deposit and administer pursuant to
156 commission authorization any federal, state or local public or
157 private funds given for express use by the commission for
158 semiquincentennial purposes.

159 (10) The First Lady, with the concurrence of the commission,
160 shall constitute one or more advisory committees to advise the
161 commission. The committees may include such representatives as
162 the respective executive officer, or his or her designee, of the
163 Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi Institutions
164 of Higher Learning, the Mississippi Community College Board, the
165 Mississippi Military Department or the Mississippi Veterans
166 Affairs Board, or representatives of presidents of Mississippi's
167 public colleges and universities, historically black colleges and
168 universities, community colleges, associations and organizations
169 of city or county officials, or state historical, educational,
170 patriotic, civic, religious, military, veterans, community
171 improvement and other organizations.

172 (11) To effectuate the purposes of this section, any
173 department, division, board, bureau, commission or agency of the



174 state or of any political subdivision thereof shall, at the
175 request of the chair of the commission or her designee, provide to
176 the commission such facilities, assistance and data as will enable
177 the committee properly to carry out its task. All departments,
178 boards, agencies, officers and institutions of the state and of
179 all subdivisions thereof shall cooperate with the commission in
180 carrying out its purposes under this section. The commission
181 shall encourage various state agencies and organizations to work
182 cooperatively to promote the semiquincentennial.

183 (12) The commission is authorized and empowered to accept
184 and expend grants and private donations from any source, including
185 federal, state, public and private entities, and may create a
186 supporting nonprofit organization, supervised and controlled by
187 the commission through majority board control and representation,
188 to accept and expend on behalf of the commission such grants and
189 private donations, to encourage the broadest volunteer
190 participation of public and private partners and organizations,
191 and to assist the commission to carry out its functions. Any
192 expenditures by the commission shall be authorized by a majority
193 vote of the nonlegislative members of the commission.

194 (13) There is hereby created in the State Treasury the
195 Mississippi Semiquincentennial Celebration Fund. Any
196 appropriations, funds or donations received by the commission
197 shall be deposited into this special fund. The fund shall be
198 maintained by the State Treasurer as a special fund, separate and



199 apart from the State General Fund. Unexpended amounts remaining
200 in this special fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not lapse
201 into the State General Fund, and any interest earned or investment
202 earnings on amounts in the fund shall be deposited to the credit
203 of the special fund. Monies in the fund shall be expended by the
204 Department of Finance and Administration after receipt of
205 requisitions submitted by the appropriate person designated by the
206 commission. Monies in the special fund may be used by the
207 commission in carrying out its responsibilities under this
208 section.

209 (14) The commission shall make an annual written report and
210 make any recommendations to the Governor and Legislature at least
211 thirty (30) days prior to the convening of each Regular Session of
212 the Legislature, beginning in 2024 and continuing through its
213 final report in 2027. The commission shall consider and recommend
214 ways for the state to commemorate the semiquincentennial through
215 state and local legacy projects for the state at large and for
216 counties and municipalities, as well as ways to enhance
217 educational programs and extended learning offered by local boards
218 of education, the Department of Education, relevant state agencies
219 and departments, and two-year and four-year institutions of higher
220 education, including historically black colleges and universities.

221 (15) This section shall stand repealed on June 30, 2027.

222 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
223 and after July 1, 2023.

