



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT
WILLIAM SNODGRASS/TENNESSEE TOWER BUILDING
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MARK EZELL
COMMISSIONER

BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

December 28, 2021

The Honorable Bill Lee
Governor
State Capitol, First Floor
600 Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee,

The Department of Tourist Development respectfully submits this report in accordance with Public Chapter 384, passed in 2019, relative to the Tennessee Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial Commission's accomplishments in 2021.

The Commission accomplished four major tasks in 2021. Over the course of the year, the Commission held seven (7) business meetings and five (5) interest and planning meetings, all led by Chairman Dr. Carroll Van West. Dr. West led the community meetings in December with four (4) occurring across the grand divisions of the state and one (1) virtually to gather Tennesseans' thoughts about the State's commemoration of America's 250th celebration and the significant events Tennesseans most hoped to showcase. During these meetings, we focused our activities on the commission's two overriding responsibilities:

- Plan, coordinate, and implement a program to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States in the year 2026, specifically highlighting the role of Tennessee and Tennesseans in, and the events succeeding, the historic event; and
- Coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies on infrastructural improvements and projects to welcome regional, national, and international tourists.

Each meeting shared similar sentiments and concurrence that any events should have a statewide focus on Tennesseans and Tennessee historical events that have shaped American democracy from the Revolutionary Era to the present. Other ideas expressed in the community meetings included the creation of a *Tennessee 250th Trail* with interpretive markers, the need for educational programs, workshops, and educator materials, and the State to host "signature events," similar to those of the Tennessee Civil War 150th celebration.

To further define the parameters of the Commission and any celebrations, the Commission developed and approved the following mission statement:

The Tennessee Commission for the Semiquincentennial of the United States promotes an inclusive statewide celebration and educational commemoration of America's 250th by interpreting and preserving Tennessee's unique stories, objects, landmarks, and places across our diverse state that defined who we are as Tennesseans and Americans.

During its meetings, the Commission voted to partner with the America 250 Foundation for a grant program. Congress created the America 250th to guide the national celebration and commemoration. During the summer and fall of 2021, America 250th met with the Tennessee Commission and discussed questions of support. Currently America 250 plans to provide Tennessee with a \$10,000 grant, a similar amount it has provided to other states with 250th commissions, with the funding being held by the Tennessee Historical Society for the Commission's use. The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development has discussed with America 250 the use and development of logos to promote programs and activities within the state.

The Commission will continue its business in 2022 beginning with discussion of the creation of a robust Tennessee 250th website to improve visibility and communications for the commission. The Department will work with the Commission to create, design, and showcase a website in the best interests of the Commission's goals. Likewise, because the community meetings emphasized the need for an active online campaign to distribute information, promote programs and activities, and create educational opportunities about Tennesseans and Tennessee events that contributed to America's democratic progress over the last 250 years, the Commission will work to further this goal.

If there should be any questions concerning the 2021 accomplishments of the Tennessee Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial Commission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Mark Ezell, Commissioner

cc: The Honorable Randy McNally, Lieutenant Governor & Speaker of the Senate
The Honorable Cameron Sexton, Speaker of the House
Honorable Members, 112th General Assembly
Dr. Carroll Van West, Chairman, Tennessee Commission on the United States
Semiquincentennial
Commission Members, Tennessee Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial