



DRAFT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The following draft legislation incorporates the findings of this report:

118TH CONGRESS

2ND SESSION

S./H. _____

To establish the National Museum of the American People to tell the story about the making of the American People, focus on the central role of the Constitution of the United States to preserve our democracy, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE/HOUSE OF THE UNITED STATES

_____, 2024

_____ introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____.

AN ACT

To establish the National Museum of the American People to tell the story about the making of the American People, focus on the central role of the Constitution of the United States in our nation, to preserve our democracy, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “National Museum of the American People Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Our Nation is struggling with adherence to its fundamental precepts of democracy established in the Constitution of the United States.

(2) Our Nation continues to struggle with acceptance of immigrant communities and individuals having diverse ancestry despite the Nation’s own diverse ancestry history and the major contributions of immigrants to our country.

(3) Our Nation recognizes its imperfections yet continues to strive to uphold the principles, aspirations, and ideals based on its founding documents upon which our Nation was founded and built.

(4) Our Nation is searching for unity and a National Museum of the American People can serve as a vehicle to bring all Americans together to help heal our Nation’s divisive wounds.

(5) A National Museum of the American People would tell the full story about the making of the American People from wherever they came: Europe, Asia and the Pacific Islands, Oceania, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas, including the First Peoples.

(6) There is no national museum in Washington, DC, that—

(A) tells the story of all of the people of the United States; or

(B) presents a chronological history of indigenous peoples, colonization, immigration, and migration to and within the United States.

(7) A National Museum of the American People would—

(A) depict the history of all groups of people who came to the United States and the contributions of those people to the United States;

(B) embody the spirit of “E Pluribus Unum”, the original motto of the United States;

(C) embrace all ethnicities, nationalities and minorities within the United States;

(D) foster a sense of belonging by all Americans;

(E) contribute to a common national identity as people of the United States;

(F) recognize the continued importance of immigrants to our Nation's success;

(G) highlight the role of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, the founding documents of the United States;

(H) explore the ways in which those documents shaped the character of the people of the United States and infused Americans with common values, and a dedication to a democratic form of government;

(I) provide resources for State, local, and ethnic museums throughout the United States that celebrate the heritage of the people of the United States; and

(J) include the stories of, and provide the benefits to, all people of the United States.

(8) People from every ethnic group in the United States would visit a National Museum of the American People to learn their own history and the history of every other ethnic group in the United States.

(9) Leaders and visitors from every country would visit a National Museum of the American People to learn about the American People.

(10) The goal of a National Museum of the American People would be to—

(A) be the best storytelling museum in the world;

(B) recount one of the most amazing stories in human history;

(C) honor all of the people who have become people of the United States;

(D) embrace that our Nation celebrates justice, equal opportunity, and respect for the human dignity of all;

(E) educate every American about the migration and immigration stories that contributed to the successes and advancement of our Nation; and

(F) foster learning about the American people at the Museum and throughout the Nation.

(11) Upon the date of enactment of this Act, non-Federal sources will be sought to support funding for the National Museum of the American People.

(12) Non-Federal sources are anticipated to provide funding to design and build the National Museum of the American People, its exhibitions, and its components.

(13) Two hundred and ninety organizations representing 75 different ethnic, nationality, minority, and genealogical groups support the establishment of a museum to tell their stories about becoming Americans in our Nation’s capital.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) Board of Regents.—The term “Board of Regents” means the Board of Regents of the National Museum of the American People.

(2) Museum.—The term “Museum” means the National Museum of the American People established by Section 4.

(3) Director.—The term “Director” means the Director of the National Museum of the American People.

SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF MUSEUM.

(1) Establishment.—There is established a museum to be known as the “National Museum of the American People”.

(2) Purpose.—The purpose of the Museum shall be to provide for—

(A) the creation and maintenance of both permanent and special exhibitions, scholarship, education programs, collections and other programs relating to the making of the American People that encompasses these time periods:

(i) First Peoples Come: 20,000+ years ago (est.) – 1607;

(ii) The Nation Takes Form: 1607 – 1820;

(iii) The Great In-Gathering: 1820 – 1924;

(iv) And Still They Come: 1924 – Present;

(B) the formation of a memorial to all people who migrated or immigrated to this land and Nation;

(C) a Center for the Advanced Study of the Making of the American People incorporating:

(i) An archive and library;

(ii) Public programs for the museum;

(iii) A National ancestry center;

(iv) An education resource center; and

(v) A Peopling of America center;

(D) the collection and study of artifacts and documents relating to the making of the American People including their immigration and migration to this land and Nation;

(E) the study of a federal holiday, American People Day, to celebrate and commemorate all of those who first came to this land and Nation;

(F) collaboration between the Museum and other State and local ethnic, nationality and minority museums, institutions and organizations to promote the study of the making of the American People concerning –

(i) development of cooperative programs and exhibitions;

(ii) identification, management, and care of collections; and

(iii) training of museum professionals.

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

(1) The President shall establish a bipartisan Board of Regents to govern the Museum.

(2) The Board of Regents shall consist of sixty voting members appointed (except as otherwise provided in this section) by the President and the following six ex officio non-voting members:

(A) one appointed by the Secretary of the Interior;

(B) one appointed by the Secretary of State;

(C) one appointed by the Secretary of Homeland Security;

(D) one appointed by the Secretary of Education;

(E) one appointed by the Director of the Census Bureau; and

(F) one appointed by the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

(3) Of the sixty voting members, three shall be appointed by the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and two by the Minority Leader from among members of the United States House of Representatives. Five shall be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate upon the recommendation of the majority and minority leaders from among members of the United States Senate. Any vacancy in the Board of Regents shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment was made.

(4) The members of the Board of Regents, as in effect immediately before the date of the enactment of this Act, are hereby designated as the initial members of the Board. Such initial members (other than the initial members appointed from the United States Senate or the United States House of Representatives) shall serve terms as follows:

(A) all initial members shall serve five-year terms ending on the last day of the month in which they were appointed.

(B) the terms of ten of such initial members, as designated in the bylaws of the Board, shall terminate after five years, ten after six years, ten after seven years, ten after nine years and ten after ten years.

(C) except as provided for above with respect to the initial members of the Board and except as otherwise provided in this subsection, Board members shall serve for five-year terms.

(5) The terms of the initial members appointed from the United States Senate or the United States House of Representatives shall expire upon the expiration of the term of Congress in session at the time of the enactment of this Act.

(6) Any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring before the expiration of the term for which his predecessor was appointed shall be appointed only for the remainder of such term. A member other than a Member of Congress appointed by the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives or the President pro tempore of the United States Senate, may serve after the expiration of his term until his successor has taken office.

(7) The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Board of Regents shall be appointed by the President from among the members of the Board and such Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall each serve for terms of five years. Vacancies in the offices of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall be filled, as they arise, by appointment of the President.

(8) The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the National Museum of the American People's Board of Regents, as in effect immediately before the date of the enactment of this Act, are hereby designated respectively as the initial Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Board. Such initial Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall serve a five year term.

(9) Members whose terms expire may be reappointed, and the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson may be reappointed to those offices.

(10) Qualifications for Board of Regents members could include a demonstrated commitment to the research, study, support or promotion of the American People as described in section 4 of this Act, together with—

(A) expertise in museum administration;

(B) expertise in fundraising or serving as a funder for nonprofit or cultural institutions;

(C) experience as a scholar focused on any aspect of the making of the American people from first peoples through today;

(D) experience in studying American art, life, history, and culture;

(E) experience in public or elected service;

(F) leadership of, or national representation for, ethnic or minority groups; or

(G) experience with museum public relations and instituting a new museum.

(H) experience in the study and promotion of the role of ethnic, racial, or cultural groups in American history.

SEC. 6. BOARD OF REGENTS PAY

(1) Except as provided in Sec 5 (2), members of the Board of Regents are each authorized to be paid the daily equivalent of the maximum annual rate of basic pay in effect for grade GS-18 of the General Schedule for each day (including travel time) during which they are engaged in the actual performance of duties of the Board. While away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Board, members of the Board shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in Government service are allowed expenses under section 5703 of title 5 of the United States Code.

(2) Members of the Board who are full-time officers or employees of the United States or Members of the Congress shall receive no additional pay by reason of their service on the Board.

SEC. 7. BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

(1) The Board of Regents shall adopt bylaws to carry out its functions under this Act. One-third of the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum, and any vacancy in the Board shall not affect its powers to function.

(2) The Board may obtain the services of experts and consultants in accordance with the provisions of section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, at rates not to exceed the daily equivalent of the maximum annual rate of basic pay in effect for grade GS-18 of the General Schedule.

(3) The Board may, in accordance with applicable law, enter into contracts and other arrangements with public agencies and with private organizations and persons and may make such payments as may be necessary to carry out its functions under this Act.

(4) The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and all executive branch departments, agencies, and establishments of the United States may assist the Board in the performance of its functions under this Act.

(5) The Secretary of the Interior may provide administrative services and support to the Board on a reimbursable basis.

(6) In general, the Board of Regents shall –

(A) approve the planning, design, and construction of the Museum;

(B) approve matters relating to the administration, operation, maintenance, and preservation of the Museum;

(C) approve annual operating budgets for the Museum; and

(D) report annually to Congress on the acquisition, disposition, and display of objects relating to the making of the American People, their life, art, history, and culture.

SEC. 8. MUSEUM DIRECTOR

(1) The Board of Regents shall, without regard to section 5311(b) of title 5, United States Code, have a Museum Director who shall be appointed by the President upon the recommendation of the Chairperson and a majority of the Board and who shall be paid at a rate not to exceed the maximum rate of basic pay payable for GS-18 of the General Schedule.

(2) Without regard to section 5311(b) of title 5, United States Code, the Museum Director may appoint and fix the pay of such additional personnel as he considers appropriate. The Museum Director and staff of the Board shall be appointed subject to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and shall be paid in accordance with the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates.

SEC. 9. MUSEUM BUILDING

(1) For purposes of establishing the National Museum of the American People referred to in Sec.4 of this Act, any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States is authorized to transfer to the administrative jurisdiction of the Board of Regents, with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission, any real property in the District of Columbia under the administrative jurisdiction of such department, agency, or instrumentality and which is deemed suitable by the Board of Regents for such Museum. With the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission, the Board may purchase, with the consent of the

owner thereof, any real property within the District of Columbia which it deems suitable for purposes of establishing such Museum.

(2) The architectural design for such Museum shall be subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission.

(3) The authority conferred pursuant to this Act for the construction of the Museum shall lapse on the date five years after the date of the enactment of this Act unless the erection or establishment of such memorial is commenced within such five year period, and prior to the commencement, the Secretary of the Interior certifies that funds are available in an amount sufficient, in the judgment of the Secretary, to ensure completion of the Museum.

SEC. 10. FUNDS TO BUILD THE MUSEUM

The Board of Regents may solicit, accept, hold, administer, and use gifts, bequests, and devises of property, both real and personal, to aid or facilitate the construction, maintenance, and operation of the Museum. Property may be accepted pursuant to this section, and the property and the proceeds thereof used as nearly as possible in accordance with the terms of the gift, bequest, or devise donating such property. For the purposes of Federal income, estate, and gift taxes, property accepted under this section shall be considered as a gift, bequest, or devise to the United States.

SEC. 11. FUNDS FROM FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

The Board of Regents may solicit, accept, hold, administer, and use gifts from foreign governments, up to a cap of \$20,000,000 per foreign nation, to aid or facilitate the construction, maintenance, and operation of the Museum in consultation with the Department of State and the Department of the Treasury.

Sec. 12. GRANT AND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

(1) In consultation with the Board of Regents and the Museum Director, the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services shall establish—

(A) a grant program with the purpose of improving operations, care of collections, and development of professional management at state and local ethnic and minority museums;

(B) a grant program with the purpose of providing internship and fellowship opportunities at ethnic and minority museums; and

(C) a scholarship program with the purpose of assisting individuals who are pursuing careers at ethnic or minority museums about the making of the American People, including humanities, sciences, life, art, history, and culture

(2) Authorization of appropriations.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services to carry out this subsection—

(A) \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2026; and

(B) such sums as are necessary for each fiscal year thereafter.

SEC. 12. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN REPORT TO PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS.

In carrying out their duties under this Act, the Board of Regents shall take into consideration the reports and plans of this document, *Bringing All Americans Together, National Museum of the American People: A Report to the President and Congress*.

SEC. 13. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

(1) There is authorized to be appropriated to the Board of Regents to carry out the purposes of this Act –

(A) \$3,000,000 for the fiscal year 2025;

(B) such sums as are necessary for each fiscal year thereafter, provided, however, that notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, none of the funds authorized herein may be available for construction. Authority to enter into contracts and to make payments under this Act, using funds authorized to be appropriated under this section, shall be effective only to the extent, and in such amounts, as provided in advance in appropriation Acts.

(2) Availability.—Amounts made available under subsection (1)(A) of this section shall remain available until expended.

(3) Use of Funds for Fundraising.—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization under this section may be used to conduct fundraising in support of the Museum from private sources.