



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Melanie Sachs, sponsor of*  
**LD 2145, Resolve, to Add Members to the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission  
and Set the Compensation Rate for Commission Members**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government*

Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Melanie Sachs. I represent House District 102, which includes Freeport. I am proud to present testimony in support of **LD 2145, Resolve, to Add Members to the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission and Set the Compensation Rate for Commission Members.**

This bill comes to you both as a continuation of legislative work and as a necessary step towards an important project before us: the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States, or the United States Semiquincentennial, in 2026. This anniversary is an opportunity for Maine to commemorate its unique history and the ways in which that history has intertwined with and contributed to the story of the United States.

As you'll hear from our Archivist later today, that work will be conducted largely by individual states. The congressionally-appointed U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and its non-profit partner, America250, have encouraged each U.S. state to form its own entity to plan for the nation's 250th anniversary. Accordingly, in the First Regular Session of the 131st Legislature, the Legislature passed LD 1029, Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Founding of the United States, which established a state-level Maine Semiquincentennial Commission to develop and coordinate the commemoration of the Semiquincentennial through educational and historical events, activities and programs. This Commission sits within the State Archivist's office and includes representatives of organizations spanning the fields of culture, education, history, and art in the state, as well as representatives of relevant state agencies, local government, and a joint representative of the tribes. This Commission has already met once to discuss its plans for the next two years, and is planning on holding another meeting in February.

In this bill, I am asking that we make two important changes to this Commission. The first change is an expansion of its membership. Those changes in membership are as follows:

1. The legislation currently authorizes "one member jointly appointed by the Speaker of the House, who is a member of a federally recognized Indian nation, tribe or band in the State based on the joint recommendation of the tribal governments of the Mi'kmaq

Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik and the Penobscot Nation". This bill seeks to eliminate this position from the Commission and add one member recommended by each tribe, a total of five new positions.

2. The bill adds "a representative of a state-based organization that promotes Franco-American culture in the State, appointed by the President of the Senate", and "a representative of a state-based organization that promotes multigenerational African American culture in the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House";
3. The bill adds two members of the public, one appointed by each of the Presiding Officers;
4. The bill adds two legislators: a Senator appointed by the Senate President, and a Representative appointed by the Speaker of the House.
5. Finally, after the bill was printed, it was suggested that two additional members be added- "a representative of a state-based organization that promotes Acadian culture in the State, appointed by the President of the Senate; and "a representative of a state-based organization that promotes Jewish heritage in the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House." I have attached a Sponsor Amendment to the end of this testimony for your consideration.

These additions are an essential step towards ensuring that the Commission best represents the people of Maine. First, the inclusion of five total tribal representatives ensures that each of the tribes, which have their own histories and identities, will be able to bring each of their sets of perspectives to the planning, facilitation, and narrative-building conducted by the Commission. The stories and lives of Maine Indians are fundamental to the history of this state and country, and their robust participation of and leadership in this commemorative work should be a priority. Second, the members representing organizations centered around Franco-American culture, African-American culture, Acadian culture, and Jewish heritage respectively will be able to speak to the legacies of these groups in Maine, and to their essential contributions to our history and our culture today. Third, adding members of the public to the Commission would ensure that Mainers from varied backgrounds would be able to incorporate their perspectives into the work of the Commission, and that the Commission adequately represents the state. The addition of legislators to the Commission would serve to meet the same goal of adequate representation while ensuring that this branch of government has a voice on the Commission.

The second set of changes follows logically from the first. All members of the commission, not only legislators, would be eligible to receive a legislative per diem following a meeting of the commission, a public hearing held by the commission, an advisory board meeting held by the commission, or participation in other official business of the commission. Members may only be compensated up to a maximum of 4 meetings per month.

This step is a recognition of the work as just that: work. Over the next two years, Commission members will apply their lived experiences as Mainers and Americans, their educational backgrounds, their professional expertise, to the vitally important work of telling the story of Maine in America, and involving as many Mainers as possible in that telling. A reasonable amount of compensation would recognize and support their efforts while providing accessibility for those whose participation may depend on or be assured by receiving it.

By expanding the membership of the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission and adding compensation to its structure, we can help ensure that the telling of Maine's story within that of the United States is undertaken by a group that is maximally representative of this state and its people. I urge you to support LD 2145, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

**L.D. 2145, “Resolve, to Add Members to the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission and Set the Compensation Rate for Commission Members”**

**SPONSOR’S AMENDMENT**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 2. Commission Membership. Resolved,** as enacted by Resolve 2023, c. 126, is amended to read:  
That the commission consists of ~~15~~ 25 ~~27~~ members as follows:

...

25. One member of the public, appointed by the President of the Senate; and

26. One member of the public, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

27. A representative of a state-based organization that promotes Acadian culture in the State, appointed by the President of the Senate; and

28. A representative of a state-based organization that promotes Jewish heritage in the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House.

In addition to the ~~15~~ 25 ~~27~~ members under this section, the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House serve as ex officio members of the commission.