



Department of the Secretary of State

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

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Maine State Archivist

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

TESTIMONY OF SHENNA BELLOWS, MAINE SECRETARY OF STATE and KATE MCBRIEN, MAINE STATE ARCHIVIST

Testifying in Favor

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

Senator Nangle, Representative Stover, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government; we are Shenna Bellows, Maine's Secretary of State, and Kate McBrien, Maine's State Archivist. The Department of Secretary of State and the Maine State Archives, which falls under the Department's jurisdiction, support L.D. 2145.

We are grateful to the sponsor for putting in this bill, which would add important community members to the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission (the Commission), as established by this committee last year. Since the goal of the Commission is to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation, we feel commission membership must include voices that accurately reflect the people of our state and country.

While the Commission has begun their work, some important community perspectives have been left out of official Commission conversations. Specifically, this bill seeks to address that omission by adding legislative members to the Commission, as well as representatives from each Wabanaki tribal community, the Franco-American Community, and the African American community. We support these additions to the Commission. Additionally, we suggest including a representative from the Acadian Community and the Jewish Community as important perspectives to include.

At the first meeting of the Maine Semiquincentennial Commission, Commission members shared a collective desire to highlight and share community stories from throughout Maine, connecting their past experiences to what Maine is today. We feel that to truly share that broad range of community experiences we need to expand the community representation on the Commission to serve as that community voice.

It is with broader participation that we can share the story of Passamaquoddy Chief Francis Joseph Neptune who was a hero of the American Revolution. In June of 1775, the Passamaquoddy tribe assisted in a military attack against the British Fleet at Pleasant Point. On December 24, 1776, General George Washington wrote to the Passamaquoddy nation from the banks of the Delaware River. In his letter he thanked them for accepting the chain of friendship he sent to them and urged them to continue resisting the British.

We can also tell the story of Prince Dunsick, a man kidnapped from Africa and enslaved in Massachusetts at the age of 8. In 1776 Prince was enlisted in the Continental Army by his enslaver, where he served for 3 years. He fought in both the Battle of Burgoyne and the Battle of Monmouth. In 1821, he lived in Leeds, Maine from where he filed for his pension. He died there in 1838.

Our nation was created on the values of every individual's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Those values meant different things and had different impacts on each of the communities mentioned above. To best understand and commemorate the formation of the United States, we need to include the many perspectives and experiences that made our great nation what it is today. For this reason, we support LD 2145 and ask you to vote ought to pass.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have.