

Date of Hearing: May 7, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 795 (Jeff Gonzalez) – As Amended April 1, 2025

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes the California Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial (CA Commission) to plan and coordinate commemorations and observances of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Prescribes the composition of the 16-member CA Commission, which must include the State Archivist as the chairperson and two Members each of the Assembly and Senate.
- 2) Creates the Semiquincentennial Fund (Fund) in the State Treasury to receive private contributions and federal grants, and makes funds available, upon appropriation, for the CA Commission's activities. The CA Commission must be supported entirely by private funding and in-kind contributions, with no direct fiscal impact on the General Fund (GF).
- 3) Requires the State Controller to oversee the Fund's fiscal management and prohibits the CA Commission from acting until the State Controller certifies there are sufficient funds in the Fund. The CA Commission must be dissolved if the State Controller determines sufficient funds are not available by February 1, 2026.
- 4) Requires, by December 31, 2028, the transfer of the CA Commission's records, files, and other historical materials to the State Archives for permanent preservation.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) GF cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant amount, likely in the low millions of dollars, to establish and operate the CA Commission. While this bill specifies the CA Commission is to be solely supported by private funds, it is unclear whether such sufficient funds will materialize. Likely CA Commission costs include support staff, operating expenses, equipment, marketing resources, outreach materials, information technology resources, and travel reimbursements. The Secretary of State (SOS) estimated costs of approximately \$1 million annually for a prior version of this bill, which would have required the State Archivist to chair a nine-member CA Commission.
- 2) Costs of an unknown amount to the SOS, which oversees the State Archives, to receive and preserve materials from the CA Commission. The magnitude of costs depends on the nature and volume of archived materials. Presumably, the ongoing costs to maintain such materials must be raised prior to the launch of the CA Commission (GF cost pressures).

- 3) Costs of an unknown amount to the State Controller's Office (SCO) to determine if sufficient private funds are available to launch the CA Commission, as such a task is outside the SCO's usual scope of work. The SCO may need to hire a consultant with expertise in this field to make a determination within one month of this bill's effective date. Presumably, the State Controller's costs to undertake such work must also be covered by private funds (GF cost pressures).

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

After serving 21 years in the United States Marine Corps, I have developed a deep, personal appreciation for our nation and the strength of the American spirit. By establishing a [CA Commission]...we will highlight California's innovative progress and commitment to the American ideals, which have helped shape our nation.

This bill is supported by TNT Fireworks.

- 2) **United States Semiquincentennial Commission (US Commission).** The US Commission is the congressional body responsible for promoting and coordinating the United States Semiquincentennial. As part of the commemoration approach established by the US Commission, each state is expected to create or designate an official entity known as a “state 250th commission” to organize the state’s planning and programming for the Semiquincentennial. As of 2022, 21 states, including Texas, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, have established such commissions, with legislation to create state commissions introduced in 11 other states. This bill establishes the CA Commission as a 16-member commission with the State Archivist serving as chairperson.
- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 3099 (Alvarez), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, would have established the CA Commission as a 17-member commission with the chairperson appointed by the Governor. AB 3099 was held on this committee’s suspense file.

SB 6 (Nguyen), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, would have established the CA Commission as a nine-member commission with the State Archivist serving as chairperson. SB 6 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee’s suspense file.

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