



Hon. Denise W. Merrill  
Chair

Jason R. Mancini, Ph.D.  
Vice Chair

**Membership**

Hon. Ned Lamont  
Governor, State of Connecticut

Nicolas Angeli  
Connecticut’s Old State House –  
Youth Leader

Rodney Butler  
Mashantucket Pequot Tribal  
Nation

Anthony Champalimaud  
Member of the Public

Alexandra Daum  
Department of Economic and  
Community Development

Steven Hernández, Esq.  
Commission on Women,  
Children, Seniors, Equity &  
Opportunity

Andrew Horowitz, Ph.D.  
Connecticut State Historian

Jonathan Kinney  
State Historic Preservation  
Office

Robert Kret  
Connecticut Historical Society

Douglas Lord  
Connecticut Library Association

Merle McGee  
Member of the Public

Charlene Russell-Tucker  
Connecticut State Department of  
Education

Deborah Schander, MLIS, JD  
Connecticut State Librarian

Jonathan Slifka  
Department of Aging and  
Disability Services

Charles Strickland  
Mohegan Tribe

Hon. Stephanie Thomas  
Secretary of State

Maisa Tisdale  
Mary and Eliza Freeman Center  
for History and Community

Sally Whipple  
Connecticut Democracy Center

Amrys O. Williams, Ph.D.  
Connecticut League of History  
Organizations

February 17, 2023

To the Honorable Governor Ned Lamont and Members of the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 22-2, signed on July 1, 2022, the Chair and Vice-chair planned for and convened the membership of Connecticut’s Semiquincentennial Commission. The first meeting was held on November 18, 2022 at Connecticut’s Old State House in Hartford. A second meeting was held at the same location on January 18, 2023.

**Commission members:**

Chair, Hon. Denise W. Merrill, Member of the Public  
Vice-chair, Jason R. Mancini, Ph.D., CT Humanities

Nicolas Angeli, Connecticut Democracy Center – Youth Leader  
Stephen Armstrong, Connecticut State Department of Education (designee)  
Anthony Champalimaud, Troutbeck – Member of the Public  
Andrew Horowitz, Ph.D., Connecticut State Historian  
Michael Johnson, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (designee)  
Robert Kret, Connecticut Historical Society (CHS)  
Catherine Labadia, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) (designee)  
Douglas Lord, Connecticut Library Association (CLA)  
Merle McGee, Everyday Democracy – Member of the Public  
Deborah Schander, MLIS, JD, Connecticut State Librarian  
Elizabeth Shapiro, Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) (designee)  
Jonathan Slifka, Department of Aging and Disability Services  
Joe Smith, Mohegan Tribe (designee)  
Hon. Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State  
Maisa Tisdale, Mary and Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community  
Sally Whipple, Connecticut Democracy Center  
Amrys O. Williams, Ph.D., Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO)  
Kathryn D’Amato, Governor of the State of Connecticut (designee)  
Steven Hernández, Esq., The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO)

**Commission Mission, Goals, and Structure:**

To plan and coordinate activities celebrating the 250th anniversary of the nation’s founding; and enhance tourism, economic development, historic education and preservation, and outdoor recreation within the state; and coordinate, engage, and liaise with the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, and other local, county, and state commissions, as well as private and public organizations and partners. The Commission will develop, encourage, and execute an inclusive celebration, commemoration, and observance of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence through civic, cultural, and historical education events and programming; and will promote the documentation, identification, and preservation of cultural and historic resources, including archives, buildings, landscapes, objects, and sites related to the semiquincentennial period.

The goals of the commission align with those set forth in the Executive Order, specifically:

- 1) Assist in ensuring that any observance of the semiquincentennial of the American Revolution is inclusive and appropriately recognizes the experiences and points of view of all people affected by the events surrounding the American Revolution;
- 2) Encourage civic, historical, educational, economic, arts and other organizations throughout the state to organize and participate in activities to expand the understanding and appreciation of the significance of the American Revolution;
- 3) Collaborate with state and local tourism agencies to promote the state as a prominent cultural and heritage tourism destination for American Revolution history;
- 4) Encourage interdisciplinary and scholarly examination of the American Revolution;
- 5) Explore the ways in which the ethos of the United States' national founding period, and the two hundred fifty years that follow, can influence the United States' present and shape its future;
- 6) Develop, encourage, and execute an inclusive celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Revolutionary War, and founding of the United States of America and all its people through civic cultural and historical education and programming;
- 7) Coordinate, engage, and liaise with the US Semiquincentennial Commission and other state and local commissions and private and public organizations and partners;
- 8) Establish an advisory council, or other such entities as it deems necessary, composed of citizens at large who have knowledge of history and interest in its semiquincentennial celebration to assist the Commission in its work;

To achieve these goals, the Commission has established the following subcommittees and respective charges:

#### Community & Organizational Engagement Subcommittee

- To reach out and provide assistance to municipalities and nonprofit organizations for the development of programs, projects, and activities pertaining to the American Revolution. Using relationships with municipalities and nonprofit organizations, connect the work of the Commission with Connecticut's communities.

#### Development Subcommittee

- To support the efforts of the commission through fundraising endeavors and solicitation of both public and private funds, including corporate sponsorships, private grants, and individual contributions.

#### Education Subcommittee

- To support the creation of educational opportunities for students (pre-K to college) that explore the intricacies of the founding period of the United States through both scholarly and informal methods.

#### Governance Subcommittee

- To focus on the creation of bylaws and structure of the Commission, including the development of an action plan, reporting on progress, and the establishment of an advisory council.

#### Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Subcommittee

- To ensure that inclusion, diversity, equity, and access are codified in the Commission's core principles, recognizing the experiences and points of view of all people affected by the events surrounding the American Revolution.

#### Tourism & Marketing Subcommittee

- To encourage collaboration with state and local tourism agencies as part of the goals and initiatives of the Commission.

#### Youth Council

- To focus efforts on reaching young audiences through various channels including social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

## Advisory Council

- Advisory council members will support the mission of the Commission through advising the work of the America 250 | CT Commission Subcommittees. The Advisory Council will also help develop resources for the Commission by identifying potential sponsoring organizations and individuals for projects and initiatives of the commemoration.

All subcommittees to identify a chair of their subcommittee as well as identify people who are not on the commission who may be a good fit for their subcommittee.

## **250<sup>th</sup> Administration**

CT Humanities is the non-profit organization recognized by the State of Connecticut to coordinate and lead the state's plans for commemorative, educational, and civics-based initiatives leading up to and during 2026. Therefore, CTH will serve as the administrative agent for America 250 | CT with the support and guidance of the commission. With public and private support, CT Humanities will play a primary role in fundraising and driving collaborative and innovative approaches to celebrating the nation's 250th.

CTH will encourage capacity building and partnership among different organizations in local communities to address the needs of external stakeholders and engage broader communities. Using avenues such as the digital humanities, cross-sector convenings, and engagement with social studies teachers, CTH will create an environment of broad cultural collaboration and access for all state residents to cultural experiences, as well as coordinate signature programs. As the principal grantmaking organization for history and cultural organizations in Connecticut, CT Humanities will bring together the cultural resources throughout our diverse state and lead the sector in developing a shared vision. America 250 | CT presents a unique opportunity to align the goals and projects of the commission with those of cultural and tourism organizations around the state.

CTH plans to hire a coordinator to serve as a liaison with town committees, to organize, shape, and guide the creation and implementation of local commemorations, and provide educational and civics-based resources.

## **Programs and Themes**

The founding legislation for the National Endowment for the Humanities states presciently that “democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens.” We recognize this as the foundation for reinvigorating our democracy. By recognizing this moment in our history, the nation has the opportunity to lay the groundwork for a reawakening of civic engagement by encouraging the participation of all residents. America 250 | CT is leading the state's efforts to support diverse, inclusive, and impactful programs in collaboration with cultural, education, history, and arts organizations throughout the state. To support, connect, and enhance these initiatives over the coming years, the commission will:

- Manage a calendar and website to raise awareness, build excitement, and encourage civic participation in activities around the semiquincentennial.
- Bring together organizations across Connecticut to celebrate the history of all residents, to be managed through CTH granting programs.
- Collaborate with community-level committees in towns across the state to direct programming from the grassroots level.

## Tell Inclusive Stories

The 250th serves as inspiration for CTH, its grantees, and the people of Connecticut to deal with and share stories that represent all of its people, past and present. For much of our history, the United States has excluded people—women, free and enslaved African Americans, Indigenous people, immigrants, people with disabilities, the poor, and many others—from full participation and representation in the nation's political, economic, and cultural life. This commemoration is an opportunity to continue the nation's reckoning with the past, both its glory and its missteps and flaws. By telling previously untold stories we will enable everyone to find a place in our nation's narrative.

## Power of Place

Connecticut is comprised of eight counties, 169 towns and cities, and countless communities with unique identities and contributions. The creation of a community-based structure will allow each of Connecticut's towns and cities to define their own programs and ideas about how they can engage their citizens. The building of an understanding of our American past will begin in the public spaces dedicated to learning: libraries, community centers, local museums, and historic sites. CTH will ensure the alignment between Connecticut's 250th activities and those of the greater region and nation, building relevance and aligning the state with other areas.

## Doing History

To renew public engagement with history, the public must be invited to participate in the process of doing history. CTH will work with organizations in the cultural sector to drive collaborative and innovative approaches to celebrating the nation's 250th. Using avenues such as the digital humanities, cross-sector convenings, and engagement with social studies teachers, we will build a collaborative environment and provide access for all state residents to cultural experiences. Inviting audiences to engage with the historical method can help them become more comfortable with the ambiguous, contested, and always-evolving nature of history. The commission's work will focus on the role of Connecticut, its people, sites, and historic context of the time. It can boost tourism in the state by amplifying the story at historic sites, trails, and buildings, and by constructing programs around notable events.

## **Action Plan**

**Goal 1:** Uncover and share stories that represent all the people of Connecticut, past and present.

**Action Step 1:** Hold community listening sessions that are open to the public.

**Schedule:** February 15 – March 15, 2023

**Benchmark 1:** Host 3-4 hour-long virtual listening sessions

**Benchmark 2:** Have at least 200 participants

**Action Step 2:** Conduct IDEA workshop with commission members.

**Schedule:** March 15 – March 31, 2023

**Benchmark 1:** At least 80% committee participation

**Benchmark 2:** Create guidelines for future activities

**Action Step 3:** Create resource library for Connecticut revolutionary history, built on outcomes from IDEA workshops and community listening sessions.

**Schedule:** Beginning April 1, 2023 [ongoing]

**Benchmark 1:** Provide list of books and online resources on ct250.org website

**Benchmark 2:** Share resource recommendations with all CT libraries and community liaisons

**Goal 2:** Create a community-based structure that will be used for Commission work moving forward.

**Action Step 1:** Identify an America 250 | CT liaison in each town and city.

**Schedule:** January 1 – June 30, 2023

**Benchmark 1:** Identify 169 liaisons across the state

**Benchmark 2:** Share liaison contact information with the public via website

**Action Step 2:** Encourage collaboration and inclusion in each municipality with participation from elected officials, community leaders, libraries, schools, community centers, local museums, and historic sites.

**Schedule:** January 15 – March 31, 2023

**Benchmark 1:** Have conveners (Connecticut League of History Organizations, Connecticut Humanities, Connecticut Library Association, Designated Regional Service Organizations, etc.) encourage collaboration and early meetings between organizations

**Benchmark 2:** Engage Tribal leaders, members of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, church leaders, and other community leaders in underrepresented groups

**Action Step 3:** Host a participatory workshop to develop and share ideas on how to align with Commission themes.

**Schedule:** July 1 – December 31, 2023

**Benchmark 1:** Host two sessions to gather ideas

**Benchmark 2:** Share information gathered with the public via website

**Goal 3:** Invite the public to participate in the process of doing history.

**Action Step 1:** Identify historic events, sites, trails, and buildings relevant to CT History that can be used to boost tourism in the state.

**Schedule:** April 1 – September 30, 2023

**Benchmark 1:** Identify at least one event, site, trail, and building per county that can be used as a starting point for research and activities

**Benchmark 2:** Share information with the public via website

**Action Step 2:** Encourage organizations around the state to engage with public history and civic literacy.

**Schedule:** July 1 – December 31, 2023

**Benchmark 1:** Host at least one capacity-building workshop around community-centric history practices

**Benchmark 2:** Increase number of civic ambassadors at Everyday Democracy

### **2023 Commission Meeting Dates**

January 18, 2023

April 19, 2023

July 12, 2023

October 18, 2023

Subcommittees will meet more frequently.