

AMERICA 250

CONNECTICUT

America 250 | CT Commission Meeting
Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at 10:00 AM
Hearing Room 1A
Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT
Minutes

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjagfeMyQoA> [Meeting] and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YStVVu6arGo> [Remarks from Governor Lamont]

Attendees

Commissioners

Denise Merrill (Chair) (In Person)
Jason Mancini (Vice Chair) (In Person)
Amrys Williams (In Person)
Andy Horowitz (In Person)
Arienne Orozco (In Person)
Margaret Khan (In Person)
Steve Armstrong (In Person)
Catherine Labadia (In Person)
Michael Werner (In Person)
Sally Whipple (Virtual)
Jonathan Slifka (Virtual)
Merle McGee (Virtual)
Tom Scanlon (Virtual)

Staff

Cyndi Tolosa (In Person)
Rachel Gonzalez (In Person)
Megan Baker (In Person)
Scott Wands (In Person)

Guest Speakers

Governor Ned Lamont
Jeff Devereux

The meeting started at 10:09 a.m.

Welcome

Chair Denise Merrill opened the meeting with a welcome, followed by brief remarks from Vice Chair Jason Mancini.

Approval of Minutes from [October 15, 2025 Meeting](#) [Attachment A]

Motion: Amrys Williams
Second: Margaret Khan
Discussion: None
Vote: Yes (12), No (-), Abstain (1)

National/Regional Update

This section begins at 4:24 in the recording.

Cyndi Tolosa provided an update on the national America250 initiatives, which states, organizations, and individuals are invited to participate in. This includes:

- [America Gives](#): An initiative which encourages individuals to log their volunteer hours in 2026
- [America's Field Trip](#): A contest for students; Connecticut has had second prize winners in previous years but has not had a first prize winner to date. First prize winners earn a field trip to a site or sites of national importance.
- [Our American Story](#): An oral history project to which all Americans are invited to contribute
- Time Capsule: A time capsule is being constructed to be opened in 250 years at the 500th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. All states have been invited to submit an item; guidelines were recently released and staff will share those requirements and invite recommendations for Connecticut's submission.

In addition to the national commission's initiatives, the White House's Task Force 250 is also working on projects under the phrase "Freedom250." Staff will pass on information about these initiatives as details are confirmed.

Staff have been working with the national commission on sublicensing for the logo and wordmark "America250." The phrase America250 may not be used for any commercial purposes; organizations with a fully executed sublicensing agreement may use the phrase for non-commercial activities. Local committees and affiliate organizations have been notified of this, and encouraged to adopt the sublicensing agreement if they wish to use the phrase for non-commercial purposes or to update their language if they are selling merchandise/tickets/etc or if they do not wish to become a sublicensee. D. Merrill asked a clarifying question regarding the state commission's logo, and C. Tolosa confirmed that, as the logo still includes the phrasing "America 250," a sublicensing agreement must be in place to use this. Once the agreement is in place, organizations and municipalities are authorized to use the phrase on any non-commercial items, including websites and street signage. Those with questions are encouraged to view the [cover sheet available here](#) or contact info@ct250.org for more information. Steve Armstrong requested clarification on merchandising emails he receives; C. Tolosa confirmed that these come from the national commission, and that sublicensees have been invited to participate in developing co-branded materials (details available on the linked cover sheet).

Updates on nationwide initiatives not run by the national commission are as follows:

- [America's Potluck](#): Utah has published a branding kit available to those interested in hosting a potluck on July 5, 2026
- [My America](#): Massachusetts has partnered with a company to offer a free opportunity for educators & their students to contribute fabric squares to a mosaic of the American flag
- [Spirit of America](#): Hawaii is encouraging states to participate in a national reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 2026, the anniversary of the first public reading. America 250 | CT will be participating in collaboration with the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, which hosts an annual reading of the Declaration and other texts, and is encouraging municipal committees and organizations to host their own event including the suggested texts available at the link.

Rachel Gonzalez shared an update on the Northeast Regional planners gathering, which is scheduled for April 13 at the Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center in Ridgefield, in partnership with Ridgefield

Commemorates America at 250. Planners from New England, New York, and Canada will attend, and commissioners will be invited to join the group. Details will follow as the event draws nearer.

July 4, 2026: Hartford Bonanza and City of Hartford

This section begins at 16:11 in the recording.

Jeff Devereux provided an overview of First Night Hartford's plans for Hartford Bonanza on July 4th in Bushnell Park in Hartford. Hartford Bonanza is a free festival which culminates in fireworks over the state capitol, and they are collaborating with the city, surrounding region, and the commission on the event. A typical year brings 20,000 people to the event; they are anticipating 50,000 this year. There will be programming around the city hosted by other organizations as well.

Review of [Annual Report](#) [Attachment B]

This section begins at 23:00 in the recording.

C. Tolosa shared the draft of the commission's annual report to the governor, which includes progress in 2025 and plans for 2026. The slides are available [here](#), and a graphic version is available [here](#). Commissioners were asked to review the draft and provide any feedback to staff by Friday, January 23, for inclusion in the final report submitted to the governor's office.

At the conclusion of the presentation, D. Merrill requested support from commissioners in outreach to the municipalities which have not yet designated a contact. Michael Werner recommended sharing the annual report with legislators, with an ask to support this endeavor as well. Arienne Orozco requested a list of priorities to share as talking points in their outreach.

Subcommittee Updates

This section begins at 44:24 in the recording.

Arienne Orozco provided an update on the work of the Governance subcommittee, which continues to meet monthly. Its main task has been reviewing affiliate applications. Roughly 65 additional applicants are needed to reach the commission's goal of 250 affiliates; commissioners are asked to continue promoting the program with their networks via the flyer linked here ([Spread the Word](#)).

Amrys Williams provided an update on the work of the Community & Organizational Engagement subcommittee. The subcommittee has continued to work to fill in the network of municipal planners (map here: [Town Committees](#)). She noted that the [Community Calendar](#) is filling in with many events around the state, and that the new e-newsletter is showcasing this. In early March, the commission will be hosting in-person regional gatherings for planners - dates, locations, and a form to RSVP are available on the website at this page: [Regional Affiliate Gatherings](#). C. Tolosa and D. Merrill added that the events on the calendar show that planners have embraced the themes of the commission and are providing a wide array of offerings.

Steve Armstrong provided an update on the work of the Education subcommittee. In November, the subcommittee hosted a webinar on the recently released Ken Burns documentary, The American Revolution, and will be hosting a webinar on resources available for educators on Thursday, January 22. He is also planning for additional webinars in partnership with the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies.

D. Merrill requested an overview of the education resources available. S. Armstrong, C. Tolosa, and R. Gonzalez provided an overview of the [educator resources page](#) on the commission's website, particularly the curriculum developed by CTH staff which is tied to the state's social studies standards, the commission's themes, and Connecticut-specific history. Educators and students are also encouraged to participate in a [local history project](#) and submit names by May 1, 2026, to receive recognition certificates for students.

Public Comment

This section begins at 1:01:26 in the recording.

No public comment was offered.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 15, 2026
Location TBD (Central CT area)

The meeting ended at 11:12 a.m.

After the official conclusion of the meeting, Governor Lamont joined the group to receive updates from the commission and its partners, as well as to provide brief remarks of his own. The recording of this segment is available [here](#).

Attachment A

**America 250 | CT Commission Meeting
Wednesday, October 15, 2025 at 10:00 AM
Community Room
Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library, Old Lyme, CT
Minutes**

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa5orUS8OsU>

Attendees

Commissioners

Denise Merrill (Chair) (In Person)
Jason Mancini (Vice Chair) (In Person)
Amrys Williams (In Person)
Andy Horowitz (Virtual)
Arienne Orozco (In Person)
Deborah Schander (In Person)
Tom Scanlon (Virtual)
Margaret Khan (In Person)
Steve Armstrong (In Person)
Liz Shapiro (In Person)
Sally Whipple (In Person)
Catherine Labadia (Virtual)
Jonathan Slifka (Virtual)
Merle McGee (Virtual)
Rob Kret (Virtual)
Melvette Hill (Virtual)
Anthony Champalimaud (Virtual)
Nicholas Angeli (Virtual)

Staff

Cyndi Tolosa (In Person)
Rachel Gonzalez (In Person)
Michael Werner (In Person)
Scott Wands (In Person)

Consultant

Emma Wiley (Virtual)

Members of the Public

Katie Huffman (In Person)

The meeting started at 10:03 a.m.

Welcome

Chair Denise Merrill opened the meeting with a welcome and brief overview of the agenda.

Approval of Minutes from [July 16, 2025 Meeting](#) [Attachment A]

Motion: Deborah Schander

Second: Steve Armstrong

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes (15), No (-), Abstain (1) [2 commissioners joined the meeting after this vote]

National/Regional Update

This section begins at 1:30 in the recording.

Vice Chair Jason Mancini provided an update on the national America250 convening of state and territory commissions in Washington, D.C., in July, which he attended with Rachel Gonzalez. The convening was hosted by the national commission and White House Task Force 250. He noted that a national calendar of events is forthcoming, and that states and territories also shared their plans. While in D.C., J. Mancini was able to meet with Doug Bergum, Secretary of the Interior, to encourage allocation of some of the \$150M earmarked for the 250th to state and territory commissions. R. Gonzalez added an overview of national initiatives that will be coming to Connecticut at a yet-to-be-determined date, including Our American Story, visits to K-12 schools, the Patriot Games and quiz bowl for high school students. Cyndi Tolosa added that the Great American Road Trip will be in Connecticut next May. J. Mancini added that many of the national sponsors are giving in-kind contributions to the America250 commission. C. Tolosa shared that Walmart will also be offering sponsorship funds to projects related to Our American Story and revolutionary anniversary programming.

J. Mancini asked Scott Wands, CT Humanities staff, to provide a brief update from the American Association for State and Local History conference in September. He shared that conversation points included funding challenges and concerns of the ability of states to participate in some initiatives.

C. Tolosa added a reminder that America's Field Trip, a national essay writing contest for students, just launched and Connecticut students can be encouraged to participate.

C. Tolosa shared an update on the northeast regional group convening in early 2026. The planning group is open to visiting Connecticut, and staff is working with the local committees in Ridgefield and New Haven to provide some options for March or April of 2026.

Funding Update

This section begins at 12:40 in the recording.

D. Merrill opened the funding update by sharing that the state's funding remained level for this year at \$100k, and there likely will not be an opportunity for additional funding prior to July 4 unless a special session is called. She noted that she sees opportunities for sponsorships and is hopeful that some initiatives will be funded by corporate and other sources.

J. Mancini reiterated that CT Humanities' federal funding was terminated in April and that the National Endowment for the Humanities has also been significantly impacted. He encouraged commissioners to view the current [sponsorship packet](#) [Attachment B] and think about connections they may have with potential funders for some of these projects.

Recaps and Upcoming Plans

This section begins at 18:51 in the recording.

C. Tolosa introduced Emma Wiley, who has been working on a statewide exhibit centered on the themes of the commission that will be offered out on loan to organizations around the state in 2026. E. Wiley provided a brief overview of her work so far. This presentation is available [here](#). C. Tolosa shared that this project will be ready to travel in early 2026.

C. Tolosa provided an update on [Give 250 Connecticut](#), coming up October 27-31, 2025. Registration closes on Friday, October 17. This round will be open to municipalities and 501c3 affiliate organizations to raise funds for their 250th projects.

C. Tolosa shared the work that has been happening amongst a large group of organizations in Hartford, planning a 5-day festival July 1-5, 2026. CTH staff plans for the commission to participate in the Hall of Flags ceremony with veterans groups in the morning of July 4, followed by a recommitment to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence with representatives of municipalities, and then an opportunity for municipalities and affiliates to participate in tabling at Bushnell Park in collaboration with Hartford Bonanza. The day will end with fireworks at the park. Liz Shapiro asked what feedback from municipalities has been, as it can be challenging to get towns into Hartford. C. Tolosa shared that most municipalities are open to sending a representative, even if it is not an elected leader.

D. Merrill noted that the proposed [meeting calendar](#) for 2026 has been attached [Attachment B]. There were no questions or concerns from the commission, so the proposed calendar will be adopted.

Subcommittee Updates

This section begins at 35:52 in the recording.

Arienne Orozco shared an update of the work the Governance subcommittee has been engaged in. The annual report to the governor will need to be drafted over the next couple of months; she requested subcommittees provide drafts to R. Gonzalez, based on the content from last year's report, by December 15, 2025. She also provided an update on the [affiliate program](#), which currently has 158 approved organizations with a goal of 250, and thanked Margaret Khan for assisting in spreading the word to libraries, as there was a large influx of libraries for the most recent application deadline. Additional recruitment can be done with [this flyer](#). C. Tolosa added that affiliates have been meeting via Zoom quarterly, which gives organizations an opportunity to connect with one another. Finally, A. Orozco noted that, while the commission is not required to report demographics to the Secretary of the State's office, the subcommittee felt it was important to continue to gather that data, so the demographic poll will be circulated shortly.

Amrys Williams shared that the Community and Organizational Engagement subcommittee has continued to support outreach efforts to towns, with just around [40 municipalities](#) left to designate a contact person. She encouraged commissioners to share any contacts that they know in the remaining towns with Cyndi & Rachel. The [community calendar](#) is continuing to be populated by events around the state. C. Tolosa added that staff is sharing events from the community calendar via social media and other channels approximately 2-3 times per week, and has recently made a bulk-submission option available to local committees and affiliates. A. Williams and C. Tolosa shared the final draft of a [Code of Conduct](#), which will be available for the commission to approve after legal review [Attachment C]. While the commission is not planning for a large-scale conference in 2026, the hope is to have it in place for smaller events and/or for other organizations to use as a template for their own work. Finally, C. Tolosa shared a draft of a [programming survey](#), which affiliates and local committees will be asked to complete in 2026 to report the impact of their 250th programming. This survey will allow staff to report requested information for national reporting, as well as enhance the annual report to the governor. Commissioners were asked to provide any feedback on the programming survey or code of conduct to C. Tolosa and R. Gonzalez by October 31.

Steve Armstrong provided an update on the work that the Education subcommittee has been doing. [Curriculum materials](#) are available, and will be presented at the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies conference on Friday. The subcommittee will now also be offering a recognition program for students and teachers who participate in a [local history project](#) tied to the 250th. Documents have been created and are being circulated to offer suggestions to teachers, local committees, and historical

societies on ways to incorporate this work into what they are already doing with students. S. Armstrong and Bilal Sekou, Co-Chair of the Education subcommittee, are also collaborating on a virtual program centered around the upcoming Ken Burns film The American Revolution. D. Merrill noted that she will be speaking at a meeting of Connecticut superintendents in November, and encouraged commissioners to talk about the 250th in their own communities to help bring this to schools.

Other Business

This section begins at 57:30 in the recording.

S. Wands provided an update on CT Humanities grants for 250th projects. While there has not been a granting deadline since the July commission meeting, some projects that received grant funds are being implemented.

D. Merrill opened a discussion on possible musical or arts projects tied to the 250th and provided an update on a project to make white oak tree saplings available to towns in 2026 for ceremonial planting.

Public Comment

This section begins at 1:09:30 in the recording.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15.

Next Meeting: TBD - January 2026
Location TBD (Hartford area)

Attachment B

Draft: Annual Report to the Governor

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. Four Commission meetings were held in 2025, as well as numerous subcommittee meetings.

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
Melvette Hill, The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO)
Andrew Horowitz, Ph.D., Connecticut State Historian
Michael Johnson, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (designee)
Margaret Khan, Connecticut Library Association (CLA)
Robert Kret, Connecticut Museum of Culture and History (CMCH)
Catherine Labadia, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) (designee)
Merle McGee, Everyday Democracy – Member of the Public
Arienne Orozco, Connecticut Secretary of the State's Office (designee)
Tom Scanlon, Governor of the State of Connecticut (designee)
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)
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)

2025 Commission Progress

In 2025, the Commission worked to increase awareness of the Semiquincentennial amongst the public, municipalities, and organizations statewide. Additionally, it endeavored to create a strong database of

resources for Connecticut organizations to draw upon in their work connected to the 250th. Progress was made against this year's goals as follows:

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

Action Step 1: Promote the commission, its themes, and resources around the state.

Benchmark 1: Participate in at least 10 festivals and fairs around the state

Benchmark 2: Conduct interviews and participate in conversations in local media outlets

Benchmark 3: Have organizations use commission website to promote local events

Progress: In 2025, CT Humanities developed two tabling kits that it loans to local committees to increase our ability to promote the commission, its themes, and resources. In total, commission members, CT Humanities staff, and local 250th committees hosted tables at nineteen community events throughout the state. The commission's parade banner was used at three parades. In addition to community events, staff hosted tables at seven conferences and summits to promote the commission on an organizational level. At all events, the question was posed: "In one word, how do you wish to feel after the 250th?" A total of 124 responses were collected in 2025. (See appendix A)

In 2025, media coverage of the commission included a radio interview with WIL's Wayne Norman, an episode of WNPR's *Where We Live* which featured one of the sessions from the commission's March conference, and many stories on local participation in a national event, *Two Lights for Tomorrow*, in April. Media outlets have also been reporting with much greater frequency on 250th programming hosted by local committees, commission affiliates, and others around the state.

The commission's community events calendar is publicly available at CT250.org, and has grown substantially with 192 events featured in 2025.

Action Step 2: Build on and share the resource library for CT history, featuring the four themes that the commission has established for CT's commemoration.

Benchmark 1: Add to list of books and online resources on CT250.org website, particularly focusing on teacher resources

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

Progress: The CT250.org website continues to be built out, with both a general resources page and specific pages for local committees, affiliates, and educators. In addition to resources curated from other organizations and state or national commissions, the America 250 | CT Commission's education subcommittee, in collaboration with CT Humanities staff, developed and published a variety of materials. Notably, this includes a curriculum packet for third, fifth, eighth, and high school grades, tied both to the commission's four themes and Connecticut's social studies standards,

with full lesson plans and additional curated resources. Resources for students to participate in a local history project were also developed, and information on how to work with students were shared with educators, local committees, and local historical societies.

Efforts to share these resources with Connecticut libraries and other community liaisons were expanded this year, including tabling at the Connecticut Library Association's annual conference and hosting a virtual information session on the 250th with its members, monthly calls with local committee members, quarterly calls with affiliate organizations, and increased outreach via mailing lists.

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 and encourage participation in at least one commemorative activity.

Benchmark 1: Identify 169 liaisons across the state, working with Councils of Government as able

Benchmark 2: Engage municipalities in signing on to a recommitment to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence on or around July 4, 2025

Progress: To date, 133 municipalities have identified a liaison. All confirmed contacts are listed on the Commission's website and depicted on an interactive map of the state. In 2025, outreach to municipalities included print and mass emails tailored depending on whether the municipality had designated a contact, as well as targeted phone and email messaging to municipalities that had not yet indicated their participation. Outreach will continue into 2026 to ensure all municipalities are aware of the initiative.

CT Humanities staff communicated with the municipal committee network regularly throughout 2025, including via monthly Zoom calls which were recorded for those unable to attend live and email follow up.

In early 2025, the commission published a template proclamation announcing participation in the 250th for municipalities, and encouraged adoption on or around July 4, 2025. To date, 9 proclamations have been received and posted on the website and 2 municipal ceremonies have been shared on the calendar. It was not a requirement for municipalities to send proclamations, so we anticipate that more have been signed. This proclamation will serve as a template for a recommitment ceremony open to representatives of all municipalities in Hartford on July 4, 2026.

Action Step 2: Continue to build and amplify a network of affiliate organizations and engage them in increasing public awareness of the 250th and planning programming aligned with the Commission's four themes.

Schedule: Ongoing

Benchmark 1: Solicit additional affiliate applications on a monthly basis through regular Commission newsletters and word of mouth

Benchmark 2: Identify organizations in underrepresented communities and fields and conduct direct outreach

Benchmark 3: List at least 60 events on commission calendar in 2025

Progress: The commission made substantial progress in building the affiliate program in 2025, ending the year with 180 approved organizations. Organizations in the affiliate network have agreed to align any of their 250th programs to the four themes of the commission, and are approved to use commission branding. There is a wide range of organizations represented in this group, including town committees, museums, historical societies, civics organizations, community groups, libraries, arts organizations, service organizations, and various businesses. A flyer advertising the program was shared widely, including at appropriate in-person events, via the commission's e-news and social media channels, and via the existing affiliate network.

The commission worked to identify organizations in underrepresented communities and fields to send targeted invitations to apply. Additionally, CT Humanities staff hosted virtual information sessions on the affiliate program with various groups, including the CT Freedom Trail and CT Library Association.

The commission's calendar has grown substantially, with 192 events listed in 2025. All events listed on the calendar have been identified by the organizer as aligning with one or more of the commission's themes.

Action Step 3: Encourage collaboration and inclusion in each municipality with participation from elected officials, community leaders, libraries, schools, community centers, local museums, and historic sites.

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

Benchmark 3: Encourage commission members to participate in these events, showing commission support for local organizations and events

Progress: The Connecticut League of Museums (formerly the Connecticut League of History Organizations) has encouraged its members to collaborate on 250th-related projects through their annual conference, as well as through workshops held in conjunction with other organizations. In 2025, the commission hosted a table at their annual conference, and CT Humanities staff presented a well-attended session on the available resources for 250th planning. Through the Connecticut Library Association, the Commission is encouraging local libraries and librarians to plan programming related to

the 250th and to engage with their local committees. Engagement included a table at their annual conference and a virtual information session. Additional outreach via Designated Regional Service Organizations included a table and presentation at the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council's Creative Economy Summit.

Efforts to engage with community leaders of underrepresented groups continued through 2025, including invitations to participate as presenters in the commission's March conference and information sessions. CT Humanities staff participate in the CT Freedom Trail meetings and will be participating in By the People: Conversations Beyond 250 to bring underrepresented stories to Connecticut libraries.

Commission members and CT Humanities staff attended events to show support whenever possible, including planning meetings for the local Hartford organizations, exhibit openings, and others.

Action Step 4: Host sessions to share the America 250 | CT Planning Guide and other resources, and encourage alignment with commission themes on projects.

Benchmark 1: Update planning guide quarterly with new ideas and information

Benchmark 2: Host at least one session quarterly with partner organizations

Benchmark 3: Host conference with sessions aimed towards helping individuals, organizations, and municipalities plan programming and events aligned with commission themes

Progress: Updates to planning resources were made throughout the year, including a virtual 250th planning workshop in February which was recorded and published along with a variety of resources, updates to the planning guide offering recommendations for using the commission's themes, additional classroom materials for educators, and continual updates to a resource database including funding opportunities, commission-published materials, and nationally available toolkits.

In addition to monthly calls with municipal planners and quarterly calls with affiliate organizations, staff participated in information sessions to share resources with the Connecticut Veterans Coalition, Conservation ConneCTion, the Connecticut Freedom Trail, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Mystic Seaport Museum, the Hartford local planning group, and others.

In March 2025, the commission hosted Shaping a Commemoration Rooted in Belonging for 250th planners from around the state. The 250 attendees included scholars, various non-profit and for-profit organizations, educators, and municipalities. Programming was guided by the themes of the commission, and included two keynote addresses and seventeen breakout sessions across six tracks tied to the themes of the commemoration. Sessions included content for a wide range of audiences, including museum professionals, educators, and municipal planners. One session, moderated by

WNPR's Catherine Shen, was recorded for an episode of "Where We Live." Survey feedback indicated that an overwhelming majority of participants found that the day was successful, and that they walked away with new ideas of how to commemorate the 250th.

Goal 3: Invite the public to engage with America 250 | CT themes.

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

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, including a timeline

Benchmark 3: Encourage scholarly research on underrepresented CT stories

Progress: This project has been tabled for completion in 2026, pending funding.

A parallel project was started in 2025 with the CT State Department of Transportation and will carry into early 2026. Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto began a project with DOT staff to develop historical signage for rest stops and train stations throughout the state to encourage tourism, particularly during the World Cup. This project is moving forward in collaboration with commission representatives and will be tied to both the four themes of the commemoration and Connecticut stories.

Action Step 2: Using information collected, work with a curatorial team to develop an inclusive exhibition exploring Connecticut's role in the Revolutionary War that can be shared with all municipalities.

Benchmark 1: With Commission Affiliates and local committees, identify sites statewide that can help tell the story of Connecticut

Benchmark 2: Create panels to feature at sites to identify them as part of this project and highlight the role of Connecticut in the founding and building of the United States, with fabrication in 2025 for distribution in 2026

Progress: This project has been adjusted to meet certain constraints, and will now take the form of a four-panel traveling exhibition to be loaned out to municipalities and affiliate organizations around the state. Each panel will explore Connecticut's role in the American Revolution with regard to one of the commission's four themes. Panels will be finalized and produced in the first weeks of 2026, and will travel throughout the year to reach the largest possible audience.

Action Step 3: Encourage organizations around the state to engage with public history and civic literacy.

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

Benchmark 2: Partner with the Secretary of the State's office to support civic engagement efforts

Progress: The Commission has joined the Secretary of the State's Civically-Engaged Organization program to stay up to date on messaging and materials, and is promoting civic engagement via its social media channels by amplifying messaging from the Secretary of the State's office (SOTS).

In addition to work sharing civics messaging from the SOTS, staff and commission members are involved in Red, White & Blue Schools, a recognition program for Connecticut K-12 schools who choose to go above and beyond in their delivery of civics education. In the 2025-26 school year, the program theme is "For the Common Good," one of the commission's themes.

In addition, the commission has published a local history project recognition program that can be completed by any student, and developed resources for educators, local historical societies, and local committees to assist students. This recognition program encourages students and educators to engage with their community in completing a project, and recommends programs such as Red, White & Blue Schools or Connecticut History Day as a means to participate.

Coordination with National and Regional Organizations

In 2025, commission members and their representatives participated in the following regional and national convenings:

- Zoom calls hosted by America250
- Zoom calls hosted by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)
- A virtual conference hosted by AASLH, 250 Con - February 27-28
- A Common Cause for All in Virginia - March 24-26
- A northeast states gathering in Providence - June 1
- America250 Convening of States & Territories in Washington, D.C. - July 28-30
- The Association for State and Local History Conference - September 11-13

The commission also collaborated with planners in Hartford, Vermont, and New York on an event commemorating the Fort Ticonderoga expedition and participated in a nation-wide commemoration of Paul Revere's ride, Two Lights for Tomorrow, in April 2025.

In 2026, the commission will host the Northeastern Regional Planners group for a day-long meeting in Ridgefield.

Outreach and Fundraising

Beginning in 2024, the commission worked to hold meetings throughout the state to increase accessibility to Connecticut residents beyond the Capitol area. In 2025, meetings were held in Hartford, Waterbury, Manchester, and Old Lyme.

Commission members and representatives have conducted interviews with media outlets, engaged in public outreach, and participated in planning meetings throughout the state. A representative list includes:

- Radio coverage on WILI and WNPR
- Extensive media coverage of Connecticut's participation in Two Lights for Tomorrow and of the Give 250 Connecticut campaign
- Expanding coverage of 250th events and programming planned by municipalities and commission affiliates
- Public outreach via tabling at community festivals by commission representatives and partner organizations, including Hartford Bonanza, Thinking and Doing Days in Hartford, and a variety of community events including Memorial Day, July Fourth, and Veterans Day celebrations, fall fairs and festivals, and 250th proclamation ceremonies

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 and act as the nonprofit fiduciary for America 250 | CT with the support and guidance of the commission.

Commission members and Connecticut Humanities have conducted additional outreach to a variety of organizations to expand knowledge of the commission's work and available resources. In 2025, Chair Denise Merrill, Vice Chair Jason Mancini, additional commissioners, and Connecticut Humanities staff attended or presented at the following gatherings around the state:

- Council of Small Towns Conference - January 29, 2025
- Connecticut Library Association Conference - April 28-29, 2025
- Arts, Culture, & Tourism Day - May 7, 2025
- Connecticut League of Museums Conference - June 1, 2025
- Creative Economy Summit - September 11, 2025
- Placemaking Summit - October 8, 2025
- Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Conference - October 17, 2025
- Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents Meeting - November 7, 2025

Other outreach efforts that have been overseen by CT Humanities in 2025 and will continue through 2026 include:

- 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.

To date, CT Humanities has secured the following support for America 250 | CT:

- \$22,682.95 from private donors
- \$150,000 from 3 private foundations
- \$8,085.50 from a fundraiser at Mohegan Sun arena

CT Humanities will continue to solicit support from corporations, foundations, and other private donors in 2025.

CT Humanities has made the 250th a funding priority, and as such has awarded grants through the CTH Fund, Museum Makeover, and Good to Great to organizations across the state which are working on projects tied to the themes of the Commission. To date, CTH has awarded 62 grants for a total of \$2,714,432. In addition to granting from its own funds, CTH is encouraging grant-making organizations around the state to prioritize the 250th.

In July and October 2025, CT Humanities hosted a crowdfunding campaign, Give 250 Connecticut. This campaign allowed municipalities and non-profit affiliate organizations (October event only) to fundraise a total of \$36,092.73 for their 250th programming and raised awareness of the 250th around the state.

Commission & Subcommittee Demographics

The commission conducted a demographic survey of commissioners and subcommittee members (see Appendix C for full report). In the survey conducted in 2024, a noted demographic that was underrepresented was youth under 18. In 2025, the education subcommittee engaged in a number of activities to increase youth involvement, including publishing curriculum resources for educators and launching a recognition program for K-12 students who complete a project related to the 250th. Additionally, the commission has engaged with university professors to involve undergraduate and graduate students in a white oak tree planting initiative.

Subcommittee Work Plans

Community & Organizational Engagement Subcommittee: The Engagement Subcommittee will promote an expansive and inclusive sense of America 250 | CT, identifying ways to engage a broad array of Connecticut residents in the commission's activities. This will require particular attention to finding ways to engage underrepresented groups that may not see themselves in this anniversary. The subcommittee will also encourage community-based activities, identifying community groups that may want to get involved, ensuring they are aware of the anniversary, and encouraging them to be as

collaborative and inclusive as possible in their events. In 2026, the subcommittee will continue to take the lead on expanding the network of municipalities.

Education Subcommittee: The Education Subcommittee will engage teachers, educators, and administrators in order to gather resources for teaching and studying the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, working to ensure that multiple perspectives are shared to encourage analysis and critical thinking. It will share events and curriculum resources with teachers in order to spread the work to students and their families about events that are happening. It will also look for opportunities to allow students to participate in the commemoration, including promotion of the local history project recognition program.

Governance Subcommittee: The Governance Subcommittee will continue to review affiliate applications and begin to identify where more direct outreach is needed to build an inclusive network of affiliates. The subcommittee will also lead the demographic make-up survey in tandem with the Secretary of the State and manage the annual report to the Governor's office. Governance subcommittee members will continue to offer support and assistance to other subcommittees as needs arise.

Marketing & Tourism Subcommittee: In partnership with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's Office of Marketing, the Marketing & Tourism Subcommittee will encourage and inspire the whole Connecticut tourism industry to create and offer America 250 | CT experiences. In 2026, the subcommittee will revamp the commission's website and collaborate with state entities for 250th activities and promotion.

2026 Commission Goals

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

Action Step 1: Promote the commission, its themes, and resources around the state.

Schedule: Ongoing

Benchmark 1: Participate, or facilitate the participation of a local committee or affiliate organization, in at least 15 festivals and fairs around the state

Benchmark 2: Conduct interviews and participate in conversations in local media outlets

Benchmark 3: List at least 250 events on commission calendar in 2026

Benchmark 4: Collect data on 250th programming from partner organizations and municipalities

Action Step 2: Build on and share the resource library for CT history, featuring the four themes that the commission has established for CT's commemoration.

Schedule: Ongoing

Benchmark 1: Add to list of books and online resources on CT250.org website, particularly focusing on teacher resources

Benchmark 2: Share resource recommendations with CT libraries, community liaisons, youth leaders, and educators

Goal 2: Continue to build 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 and encourage participation in at least one commemorative activity.

Schedule: Ongoing

Benchmark 1: Identify 169 liaisons across the state, working with Councils of Government as able

Benchmark 2: Engage municipalities at a ceremony recommitting to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence on or around July 4, 2026

Action Step 2: Continue to build and amplify a network of affiliate organizations and engage them in increasing public awareness of the 250th and planning programming aligned with the Commission's four themes.

Schedule: Ongoing

Benchmark 1: Solicit additional affiliate applications on a monthly basis through June 2026

Benchmark 2: Identify organizations in underrepresented communities and fields and conduct direct outreach

Action Step 3: Encourage collaboration and inclusion in each municipality with participation from elected officials, community leaders, libraries, schools, community centers, local museums, and historic sites.

Schedule: Ongoing

Benchmark 1: Have conveners (Connecticut League of Museums, Connecticut Humanities, Connecticut Library Association, Designated Regional Service Organizations, etc.) encourage collaboration and 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 to host, participate in, and shape 250th activities in their communities

Benchmark 3: Encourage commission members to participate in these events, showing commission support for local organizations and events

Action Step 4: Host sessions to share the America 250 | CT Planning Guide and other resources, and encourage alignment with commission themes on projects.

Schedule: January 1 - July 4, 2026

Benchmark 1: Update resource list quarterly with new ideas and information

Benchmark 2: Host at least six virtual sessions with partner organizations to aid planning of programs aligned with commission themes

Benchmark 3: Host at least three in-person convenings for partner organizations

Goal 3: Invite the public to engage with America 250 | CT themes.

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

Schedule: January 1 – April 30, 2026

Benchmark 1: Identify at least one event, site, trail, and building per county that can be included on a broader revolutionary trail

Benchmark 2: Share information with the public via website, including history trails for tourism, a timeline of revolutionary war events, and attractions

Benchmark 3: Encourage scholarly research on underrepresented CT stories and make these accessible for residents and tourists

Action Step 2: Using information collected, work with a curatorial team to develop an inclusive exhibition exploring Connecticut's role in the Revolutionary War that can be shared with all municipalities.

Schedule: Ongoing through 2026

Benchmark 1: Identify 250th stories in communities throughout Connecticut and promote sites tied to those stories

Benchmark 2: Coordinate schedule for traveling exhibition exploring Connecticut's role in the American Revolution

Action Step 3: Encourage organizations around the state to engage with public history and civic literacy.

Schedule: Ongoing

Benchmark 1: Promote local history initiatives by highlighting people, places, and events in communities throughout Connecticut and encouraging broad participation in local history initiatives

Benchmark 2: Partner with the Secretary of the State's office to support civic engagement efforts

DRAFT

Appendix B: 2026 Commission Meeting Dates

Commission

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 – 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesday, April 15, 2026 – 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesday, July 15, 2026 – 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesday, October 21, 2026 – 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesday, January 20, 2027 - 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Community & Organizational Engagement Subcommittee

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 – 1:00 - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, March 24, 2026 – 1:00 - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, May 12, 2026 – 1:00 - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, June 23, 2026 – 1:00 - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, August 11, 2026 – 1:00 - 2:00 PM
Tuesday, November 10, 2026 – 1:00 - 2:00 PM

Education Subcommittee

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 – 3:30 to 5:00 PM
Tuesday, April 28, 2026 – 3:30 to 5:00 PM
Tuesday, July 28, 2026 – 3:30 to 5:00 PM
Tuesday, October 27, 2026 – 3:30 to 5:00 PM

Governance Subcommittee

Thursday, January 15, 2026 – 9:00 to 9:30 AM
Wednesday, February 11, 2026 – 10:00 to 10:30 AM
Wednesday, March 11, 2026 – 10:00 to 10:30 AM
Wednesday, April 8, 2026 – 10:00 to 10:30 AM
Wednesday, May 13, 2026 – 10:00 to 10:30 AM
Wednesday, June 10, 2026 – 10:00 to 10:30 AM
Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – 10:00 to 10:30 AM
Wednesday, December 9, 2026 – 10:00 to 10:30 AM

Marketing & Tourism Subcommittee

Thursday, June 11, 2026 – 10:00 to 11:00 AM

Appendix C: 2025 Gender & Racial Composition of the America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittees

For over 25 years, Connecticut law (Connecticut General Statutes Section 4-9b) has required state boards, commissions, committees and councils (“boards and commissions”), which have at least one member appointed by the Governor or a member of the General Assembly, to report the gender and racial composition of their appointed membership.¹

Included in this report are the gender and racial composition tables required by the state, as well as additional data collected to track progress towards inclusion, diversity, equity, and access for commission purposes.

Findings

Thirteen of 21 Commission members and 14 of 44 subcommittee members responded to the survey, with a total of 27 responses collected. To ensure the privacy of all respondents, the data in this report has been aggregated to include all Commission and Subcommittee (hereafter referred to as “the Commission”) respondents in one data set. It should be noted that, with a response rate of 41%, the data from this survey may not be truly representative of the Commission as a whole.

Comparative data for the majority of categories has been sourced from the most recent census estimates available (2024) on the Connecticut Department of Public Health’s website. Where comparative data for the state of Connecticut was unavailable, U.S. Census Bureau data for the United States population as a whole was used.

Based on respondent data, some key points are as follows:

- The Commission includes a higher percentage of White participants than the state as a whole (78% vs 62%)
- The Commission includes a significantly lower proportion of those who identified as Hispanic/Latino than the state as a whole (7% vs 19%).
- The percentage of respondents who identified as Black/African American was proportionally similar to the demographics of the state as a whole (both 11%).
- Age distribution of the Commission is concentrated between 35-65 (78% of respondents vs 39% of the state population). Only one respondent fell in the 19-34 bracket (4% vs 19% of the state population).

¹ From the 2023 Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Councils Report, Office of the Secretary of the State, https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sots/education/diversityreport/2023_gender_race_board_report.pdf

- Based on 2024 Gallup polling, the proportion of the Commission who identify as LGBTQ+ roughly mirrors the U.S. population (7% vs 9%).²
- Those on the Commission self-identified as having a disability at a significantly lower rate than the U.S. population as a whole (0% vs 14%).

Gender Representation

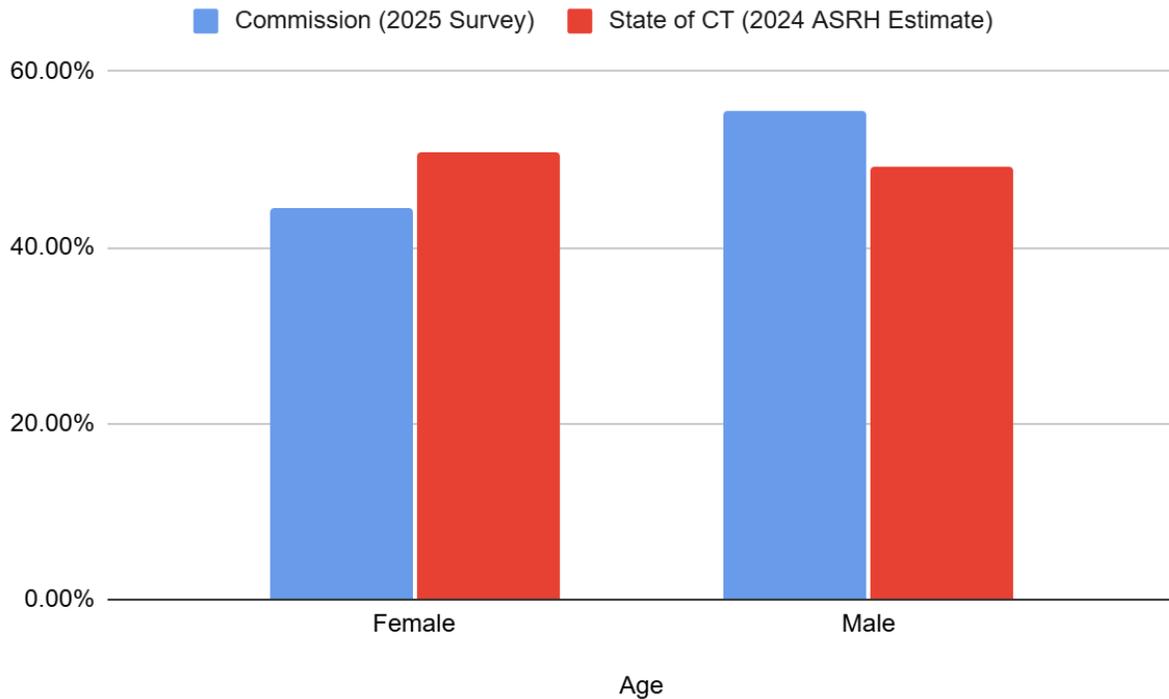
Respondents were given the option to select “Female,” “Male,” “Non-Binary,” or “Prefer not to say.” All respondents selected either “Female” or “Male.” Those identifying as female made up 44% of the Commission, compared to 51% of the population of the state of Connecticut. Those identifying as male comprise 56% of the Commission, as compared to 49% of the state’s population.

Table 1. Gender Representation of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus State of Connecticut

Sex/Gender	Commission (2025 Survey)	State of CT (2024 ASRH Estimate)
Female	44.44%	50.92%
Male	55.56%	49.08%
Non-Binary	0.00%	-
Prefer not to say	0.00%	-

² Data from Gallup, “LGBTQ+ Identification in U.S. Rises to 9.3%,” February 20, 2025, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/656708/lgbtq-identification-rises.aspx>

Chart 1. Gender Representation of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus State of Connecticut



Racial Diversity

The racial/ethnic groups which were most notably divergent from the proportion of the state’s population were Hispanic/Latino of any race and White (not Hispanic/Latino). Those identified as Hispanic/Latino only comprised 7% of the Commission versus 19% of the state as a whole. In contrast, those who identified as White (not Hispanic/Latino) comprised 78% of the Commission versus 62% of the state as a whole. The percentage of Commission members identifying as Black/African American is roughly equivalent to the percentage of the state as a whole at 11%. The percentage identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native was higher than the state as a whole, however, it should be noted that due to the small sample size, only one individual was represented. No Commission members identified as Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or two or more races (not Hispanic or Latino).

When broken out by gender, the only notable difference is the proportion of those identifying as a White female on the Commission is closely correlated to the state population as a whole (33% vs 32%).

Table 2. Racial Diversity of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus State of Connecticut

Race/Ethnicity	Commission (2025 Survey)	State of CT (2024 ASRH Estimate)
Hispanic/Latino, of any race	7.41%	19.23%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.70%	0.22%
Asian	0.00%	5.33%
Black/African American (not Hispanic/Latino)	11.11%	10.99%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.04%
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	77.78%	62.18%
Two or more races (not Hispanic/Latino)	0.00%	2.01%
Preferred not to answer regarding race	0.00%	-

Chart 2. Racial Diversity of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus State of Connecticut

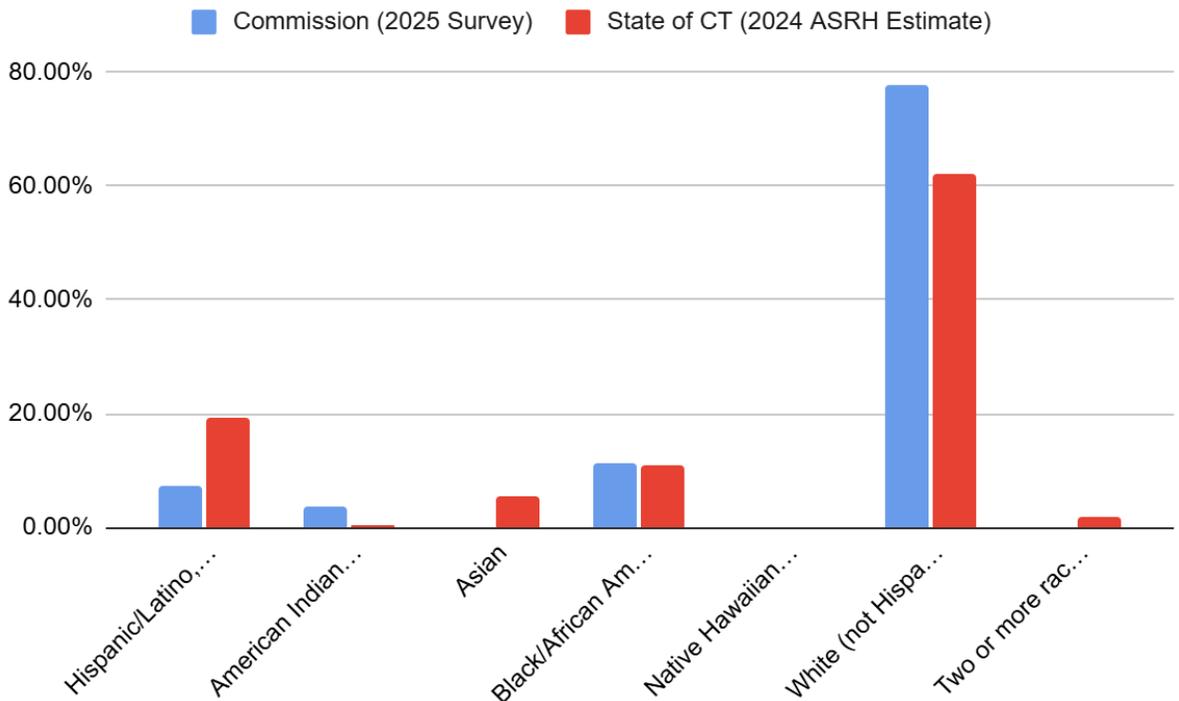


Table 3. Female Racial Diversity of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus State of Connecticut

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Commission (2025 Survey)	Percentage of State of CT Population (2024 ASRH Estimate)³
Hispanic/Latino, of any race	3.70%	9.67%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.70%	0.11%
Asian	0.00%	2.74%
Black/African American (not Hispanic/Latino)	3.70%	5.73%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.02%
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	33.33%	31.63%
Two or more races (not Hispanic/Latino)	0.00%	1.02%
Preferred not to answer regarding race	0.00%	-

³ Data from Connecticut State Department of Public Health, Annual State & County Population with Demographics

Table 4. Male Racial Diversity of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus State of Connecticut

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Commission (2025 Survey)	Percentage of State of CT Population (2024 ASRH Estimate) ⁴
Hispanic/Latino, of any race	3.70%	9.56%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.00%	0.11%
Asian	0.00%	2.58%
Black/African American (not Hispanic/Latino)	7.41%	5.26%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.02%
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	44.44%	30.55%
Two or more races (not Hispanic/Latino)	0.00%	0.99%
Preferred not to answer regarding race	0.00%	-

Age Representation

Respondents were asked to select one of five age brackets or were given the option to select “prefer not to say.” The state of Connecticut population as a whole are roughly evenly divided amongst the five given age brackets, with approximately 20% of the total population in each group. Amongst the Commission, youth under age 18 are not represented, and only one respondent fell into the 19-34 age bracket. The over 65 age bracket roughly mirrors the demographics of the state as a whole. A significantly higher percentage of the Commission falls within the 35-50 and 51-65 age brackets.

⁴ Data from Connecticut State Department of Public Health, Annual State & County Population with Demographics

Table 5. Age Diversity of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus State of Connecticut

Age	Commission (2025 Survey)	State of CT (2024 ASRH Estimate) ⁵
Under 18	0%	22.88%
19-34	3.07%	19.26%
35-50	33.33%	18.87%
51-65	44.44%	19.82%
Over 65	18.52%	19.43%
Prefer not to say	0.00%	-

Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

Question: Are you a member of the LGBTQ+ community?

Two respondents selected “yes,” 24 respondents selected “no,” and one selected “prefer not to say.” This equates to just over 7% of the Commission self-identifying as members of the LGBTQ+ community. For comparison, a recent Gallup poll of U.S. adults posed the question: “Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? You can select as many as apply. Straight or heterosexual, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.” In this poll, 9.3% of respondents self-identified as LGBTQ+, indicating that the Commission includes a roughly equivalent proportion of members of this community to the country at large.

Table 6. Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members

LGBTQ+	Percentage of Commission (2025 Survey)
Yes	7.41%
No	88.89%
Prefer not to say	3.70%

⁵ Data from Connecticut State Department of Public Health, Annual State & County Population with Demographics

Disability Characteristics

Question: "Are you a member of the disability community?"

Zero respondents selected "yes," 26 selected "no," and one selected "prefer not to say." This is in contrast with almost 14% of the United States population identified as having disability characteristics.

Table 7. Disability Characteristics of America 250 | CT Commission & Subcommittee Members versus U.S. Population

Disability Community	Percentage of Commission (2025 Survey)	Percentage of U.S. Population (2024 U.S. Census Bureau) ⁶
Yes	0.00%	13.70%
No	96.30%	86.30%
Prefer not to say	3.70%	N/A

Conclusions

The America 250 | CT Commission's stated Mission and Vision prioritizes an inclusive commemoration in which all Connecticut residents may see themselves reflected. The results of this survey indicate many areas of strength in that regard, as well as some notable areas of weakness. Where gaps have been identified, there is room for reflection on the appropriate actions to close these gaps.

⁶ Data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Disability Characteristics 1-Year Estimate Tables, 2024, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S1810?q=disability>