



AMERICA250

**AMERICA250
WISCONSIN COMMISSION
2024 ANNUAL REPORT**





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LETTER OF CONVEYANCE

December 16, 2024

The Honorable Tony Evers
Office of the Governor
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos
217 West, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Senate President Mary Felzkowski
415 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers, Assembly Speaker Vos, and Senate President Felzkowski:

It is my privilege to transmit the third annual report of the Wisconsin Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial Commission (Commission). I was honored to be appointed to the Commission and even more honored to serve as Chair.

The Commission has been quite active since our last report. We have supported the National America250 Commission's programs, including America's Field Trip. Commission leadership also attended the Williamsburg Summit of States in March 2024, finding it a valuable experience. Wisconsin was also represented at national convenings in Washington in July 2024 and Philadelphia in September 2024.

Commission staff and leaders have held several meetings with other states to share information and discuss collaboration opportunities. These include Wisconsin's neighbors of the Old Northwest plus Iowa and the Dakotas, alongside collaborations with states on the East Coast (primarily Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey) connected to Wisconsin via later population migration and displacement. The Commission has also advised colleagues in other states about the military's heritage, birthdays, and ways to create a meaningful commemoration in states outside the original Thirteen Colonies.

These efforts and the Two Lights For Tomorrow initiative outlined in this report have made Wisconsin a recognized national leader among state commissions for the semi-quincentennial. Our progress results from enthusiastic collaboration between Commission members, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs.

We are on the cusp of the 250th birthday of our nation. Next year marks the 250th anniversary of the War of Independence's start, the birthday of the U.S. military, and the creation of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The following year is the birthday of the United States on July 4, 2026. These anniversaries offer a chance to honor these legacies and reflect on what it means to be a Wisconsinite and an American. We look forward to educational events, community celebrations, respectful dialogues, and meaningful engagement across the state.

As chair of the commission, I am excited to continue this journey with my fellow commissioners and partners around the state to seize the opportunities on the horizon.

On Wisconsin, and, as ever, Forward!

Sincerely,



Christopher L. Kolakowski, Chair
America250 Wisconsin Commission



COUNTDOWN TO 250

When independence from Great Britain was won in 1783, the land, now known as Wisconsin, became part of the United States. Descendants of Founders and other Revolutionary War veterans moved to Wisconsin Territory and the State of Wisconsin, many of whom are buried in Wisconsin. The principles that define Wisconsin and its government are based on those enshrined in America's founding documents.

On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to honor the contributions of all Americans. Wisconsin has an excellent opportunity to explore our state's story and connect Wisconsinites with America's founding principles.

The Commission continues to work closely with the United States Semiquincentennial Commission (America250). America250 is a nonpartisan initiative working to engage every American in commemorating the 250th anniversary of our country. It is charged with orchestrating the largest and most inclusive anniversary observance in our nation's history. Over the next two years, the national America250 will continue to host commemorative events, together with other state America250 commissions and community leaders, inviting all Americans to reflect on the nation's past, honor the contributions of Americans from all walks of life, and look to the future for the next generation and beyond.

As a state-level partner with the national America250, the Wisconsin America250 Commission shares these same goals. This milestone provides an unparalleled opportunity to remind all Wisconsinites what this State and nation have done over our histories and what we collectively stand for by specifically highlighting Wisconsin's role in the nation's founding and the impact of its people on the nation's past, present, and future. The Commission will be focusing its efforts on the following key dates, commemorated with signature events and outreach initiatives to Wisconsin communities:

- **April 18, 2025** – Two Lights for Tomorrow (*Details on page 7*)
- **June 14, 2025** – 250th birthday of the Military. The Army turns 250 years old on **June 14, 2025**, followed by the Navy on **October 13** and the Marine Corps on **November 10**. Other branches of the military are included through their ties to one of these three services. Public ceremonies will occur at the State Capitol on these key dates, hosted in partnership between the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and the Wisconsin National Guard. In addition to the ceremonies, other events and programs are planned throughout the year to highlight the military legacy and its impact.
- **July 4, 2026** – 250th birthday of the United States. A ceremony will be held at the State Capitol in Madison to commemorate this historical event. In addition, outreach efforts will encourage communities and sites around the state to host local celebrations of this important day.

During the 2025-26 school year, the Commission and its committees will serve as a clearinghouse for educational events and opportunities relating to the semi-quincentennial for use by public, private, and tribal elementary and secondary schools throughout the state. Per Wisconsin Act 95, each public elementary or secondary school, including each charter school, shall provide at least one event or educational opportunity to pupils in the 2025–26 school year.

On the 4th of July 2026, the Wisconsin Historical Society will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Old World Wisconsin along with our nation's 250th Commemoration through a reimagined guest experience, arrival building and electric trams that will connect visitors to stories of national immigration and migration. The Wisconsin Magazine of History will also publish four commemorative issues during 2026 focusing on our nation's history.

When the Wisconsin History Center opens in the fall of 2027, it will include a new permanent exhibition on American civics and democracy. The story of democracy in America is anything but inevitable. Stretching back well before the writing of the U.S. Constitution, the choices and actions taken each day by the people in this place we call Wisconsin have shaped and shifted how we live together. This exhibition featuring the Society's North American history collections will explore the history of our nation's and our state's democracy and how this legacy has set the stage for present experiences and future possibilities. It will welcome visitors as unique individuals while deepening their understanding that they are part of something larger than themselves.



YEAR IN REVIEW

The *Wisconsin Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial Commission* (Commission) was established on December 3, 2021, with the enactment of 2021 Wisconsin Act 95. (See *Appendix A*) The Commission is administratively assigned to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) and sunsets on January 1, 2027.

The Commission is comprised of 14 statutorily defined members, including the Governor and leaders of the legislature or their designees, as specified in Act 95. (See *Appendix C for the list of current Commission members.*) A Commission member's appointment is permanent unless the member voluntarily resigns and retains their role even if they no longer retain the status that qualified them for the appointment. When a Commission member resigns, the position is filled per statutes.

There have been five resignations since the initial appointments.

- April 2023: Charlene Backus, Wisconsin Society Daughters of the American Revolution. Succeeded by Gena Selby.
- August 2023: Sen. Kathy Bernier, designee of the Senate President. Succeeded by Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara
- June 2024: Rep. Amy Loudenbeck, designee of the Speaker of the Assembly. Succeeded by Rep. Joseph Knilans.
- November 2024: Sen. Joan Ballweg, designee of the Senate Majority Leader. Successor to be determined.
- December 2024: Ariana Beno, designee of the Assembly Majority Leader. Succeeded by Rep. Karen Hurd.

The Commission expresses deep gratitude to Charlene Backus, Sen. Kathy Bernier, Rep. Amy Loudenbeck, Sen. Joan Ballweg, and Ariana Beno for their commitment, leadership, and expertise in helping to guide the Commission's vision and fulfill its statutory responsibilities.

In 2024, the Commission met quarterly in March, June, September, and November at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in downtown Madison, WI.

- March 16 Commission Meeting: Cheryl Wilson, Virginia A250 Executive Director, presented Virginia's plans and initiatives leading up to July 4, 2026.
- June 18 Commission Meeting: Casandra Coleman, Pennsylvania A250 Executive Director, presented Pennsylvania's plans and initiatives. In 2021, America250PA became the first official state partner of the America 250 national effort.
- September 17 Commission Meeting: August Bushman, Wisconsin's first-place winner of America's Field Trip contest, shared his contest submission and details about the field trip experience he was given as an awardee. (*Details on page 5*)
- November 13 Commission Meeting: Todd Kleismit, Ohio A250 Executive Director, presented Ohio's plans and initiatives.

To carry out its mission, the Commission formed eight committees to engage other partners and citizens to forward its mission and vision. Per each committee's charter, each committee is led by a Chair and Vice Chair and is comprised of two representatives from the Commission, at least one non-commission member, and other non-voting members that are selected based on expertise. These committees met throughout the year and continue to develop goals and work plans for statewide engagement. (See *Appendix D*)

As it has since the Commission's inception, a workgroup comprised of staff from WDVA and WHS continues to meet weekly to support the Commission and its committees, assist with coordination and organization, and maintain communication channels with the national America250, other state commissions, organizations, and workgroups across the country. (See *Appendix E*)



AMERICA'S FIELD TRIP

America's Field Trip is a national America250 contest that invites students in grades 3–12 to participate in America's 250th anniversary by encouraging them to reflect on what America means to them. Each first-place awardee receives an unforgettable field trip experience at some of the nation's most iconic historic and cultural landmarks. Second-place awardees receive a \$500 cash award. The teacher associated with the top-scoring student submissions in each grade level category gets a \$1,000 cash award.

In its debut contest for the 2024-25 school year, students were asked to submit writing or original artwork in response to the contest's prompt: **"What does America mean to you?"**

A diverse panel of judges, consisting of current and former educators, selected 150 students from 44 states and territories. Entries were judged on Clarity of Idea (25%), Student Voice (50%), and Presentation (25%). Twenty-five first-place awardees were selected from each grade level category. The awardees received airfare and lodging for a 3-day, 2-night trip to a select historical or cultural.



August Bushman, a 6th grader from Plover, Wisconsin, represented Wisconsin as one of the first-place winners. In his [YouTube](#) submission, August shared that America meant a place defined by hope, diversity, security, hard work, civic action, beauty, and freedom. August ends his submission entry by saying, "America is a-w-e-s-o-m-e!"

For his winning field trip experience, August chose Rocky Mountain National Park, where he spent a weekend camping, hiking, and horseback riding.

In addition to the trip, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs recognized August's achievement by inviting him and his family to visit with Gov. Evers, tour the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum, and give a presentation about his contest submission and his trip to the Commission members at their September meeting.



NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

VIRGINIA: A COMMON CAUSE FOR ALL

In March 2024, the Virginia A250 Commission hosted a two-day convening in Williamsburg, dubbed “A Common Cause to All.” This event provided a vital opportunity for A250 planners to network, coordinate, collaborate, and learn from a slate of inspirational speakers. More than 300 participants from 34 states attended.



“It was a very productive trip. We planted good seeds and nurtured important partnerships. In a series of discussions over two days, much information came across about presenting the 250th and opportunities for collaboration among the states,” said Chair Kolakowski. *“Many states were also interested in learning more about what Wisconsin was doing for the military’s 250th birthday, as most state commissions had not considered those dates and their possibilities.”*

“Another element of the gathering was the array of dynamic and thoughtful public and academic speakers,” said Vice Chair Overland. *“A few speakers emphasized the importance of accuracy in sharing our complete historical record.”*

Pictured is Wisconsin’s delegation: (L-R) Kevin Hampton from WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Laurel Miller from the Wisconsin Historical Society, Commission Vice Chair Christian Overland, Angela Titus from the Wisconsin Historical Society, and Commission Chair Christopher Kolakowski.

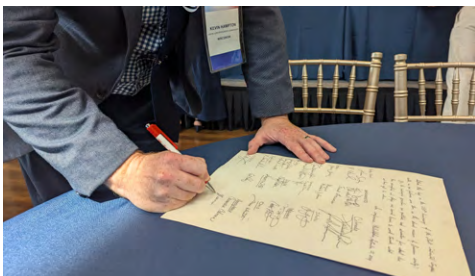
WASHINGTON, D.C.: A NATIONAL CONVENING OF STATES AND TERRITORIES

In July 2024, the national America250 Commission hosted a gathering in Washington, D.C., for staff from state and territory commissions. Representing Wisconsin, WDVA’s Kevin Hampton presented on the Wisconsin Commission’s status and priorities for 2025 and the Two Lights for Tomorrow initiative, which garnered support and interest from numerous state, national, and federal agency partners. This opportunity further showcased Wisconsin as a grassroots leader in national collaboration and initiatives.



PHILADELPHIA: FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS CONVENING

In September 2024, Pennsylvania’s A250 commission hosted a national convening of program planners to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the First Continental Congress, which was held in Pennsylvania from September to October 1774.



A highlight of the convening included a recreation of the signature page from the Continental Association of 1774, at which delegates from every colony signed the “Continental Association”, a document that outlined their commitment and unanimity in support of each other. To proclaim gratitude and admiration of those forefathers and pay homage to that historical event 250 years ago, a facsimile of the signature page was signed by America250 Commission Chair Rosie Rios and delegates of the 2024 First Continental Congress, spearheaded by WDVA’s Kevin Hampton.

MIDWEST REGIONAL GROUP

Under Commission staff leadership, the Midwest Regional Coordinating Group was formed. What began with the Old Northwest Territory States (Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota), the group has grown to encompass other neighboring states, including North and South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas, and Kentucky. The group has provided a vital opportunity to brainstorm ideas, share resources, and collaborate across state lines as states continue to lay the groundwork for planning A250 events.



TWO LIGHTS FOR TOMORROW

Two Lights for Tomorrow, a vision mobilized by Wisconsin Veterans Museum Curator of History Kevin Hampton, is a national initiative prompted by the anniversary of Paul Revere's ride on the night of April 18, 1775, and famously depicted in the "One if by land, two if by sea" line in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem. The two lanterns in the belfry of the Old North Church in Boston 250 years ago weren't just a signal for riders to carry on and spread the message in case Paul Revere got caught. It was a signal calling for people to come together and to support and serve each other in their communities to ensure a better tomorrow.



For Wisconsin's commemoration, tentative plans include placing two lights in the cupola of Wisconsin's State Capitol. Planners of the event hope to hold a public lighting ceremony on Monday, April 14th, with guest speakers, musical performances, and designated dignitaries to ceremoniously "flip the switch", illuminating the two lights atop the Capitol's dome.

The *Two Lights for Tomorrow* initiative has quickly gained momentum with other states. Since the initiative is scalable, commissions nationwide can participate within their capabilities regardless of robust funding. At the time of this report, 35 states have indicated interest in participating, in addition to the National Park System, which encourages participation from the visitor centers in their regions, and numerous local cultural, historical, and heritage sites from across the country. Advocacy will continue in hopes of achieving participation in every state.



APPENDIX A – 2021 WI ACT 95

State of Wisconsin



2021 Assembly Bill 388

Date of enactment: December 3, 2021
Date of publication*: December 4, 2021

2021 WISCONSIN ACT 95

AN ACT *to create* 13.625 (11), 15.495, 19.56 (3) (g), 44.015 (8), 44.02 (29) and 45.13 of the statutes; **relating to:**

establishing the Wisconsin commission for the United States semiquincentennial commission to coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 13.625 (11) of the statutes is created to read:

13.625 (11) This section does not apply to the solicitation, acceptance, or furnishing of anything of pecuniary value by the Wisconsin commission for the U.S. semiquincentennial commission, or to a principal furnishing anything of pecuniary value to the Wisconsin commission for the U.S. semiquincentennial commission, under s. 19.56 (3) (g) for the activity specified in s. 19.56 (3) (g).

SECTION 2. 15.495 of the statutes is created to read:

15.495 Same; attached commission. (1) **WISCONSIN COMMISSION FOR THE UNITED STATES SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL COMMISSION.** There is created a Wisconsin commission for the U.S. semiquincentennial commission, which is attached to the department of veterans affairs. A commission member, once installed, is a permanent member of the commission, and shall retain his or her role even if the commission member no longer retains his or her status that qualified him or her for membership, unless the commission member voluntarily steps down from the commission. Notwithstanding s. 15.01 (2), the commission shall be composed of the following members:

- (a) The speaker of the assembly, or his or her designee.
- (b) The senate president, or his or her designee.
- (c) The senate majority leader, or his or her designee.
- (d) The senate minority leader, or his or her designee.
- (e) The assembly majority leader, or his or her designee.
- (f) The assembly minority leader, or his or her designee.
- (g) The governor, or his or her designee.
- (h) The chief justice of the supreme court, or his or her designee.
- (i) The director of the state historical society.
- (j) The director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum.
- (k) The director of the Tourism Federation of Wisconsin.
- (L) A member of a federally recognized American Indian tribe or band in this state.



(m) A member of the Wisconsin Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

(n) A member of the Wisconsin Society Sons of the American Revolution.

SECTION 3. 19.56 (3) (g) of the statutes is created to read:

19.56 (3) (g) A state public official who is a member of the Wisconsin commission for the U.S. semiquincentennial commission may solicit, receive, and retain on behalf of the state anything of value for the purposes specified under s. 45.13.

SECTION 4. 44.015 (8) of the statutes is created to read:

44.015 (8) Contract with the Wisconsin Historical Foundation, Inc., for the purpose of providing support to the Wisconsin commission for the U.S. semiquincentennial commission under s. 45.13 (4) in performance of the commission's functions of accepting donations, making procurements, expending funds, and entering into contracts, leases, or other agreements.

SECTION 5. 44.02 (29) of the statutes is created to read:

44.02 (29) Support the Wisconsin commission for the U.S. semiquincentennial commission as provided for in s. 45.13 (4).

SECTION 6. 45.13 of the statutes is created to read:

45.13 Wisconsin commission for the United States semiquincentennial commission. (1) (a) The Wisconsin commission for the U.S. semiquincentennial commission shall plan, coordinate, and implement a program to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States and specifically highlight the role of Wisconsin in that event and the impact of its people on the nation's past, present, and future.

(b) The commission shall hold public meetings to solicit the input of citizens throughout the state in developing programs for the semiquincentennial.

(c) The program is subject to the support of a majority of the commission, and a majority of the members constitutes a quorum.

(d) Members may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred when performing functions under this section.

(2) The commission shall coordinate with federal, state, local, and private agencies on infrastructural improvements and on projects to welcome regional, national, and international tourists.

(3) (a) The commission shall plan and prepare educational events and opportunities relating to the semiquincentennial for use by public, private, and tribal elementary and secondary schools throughout the state. The commission shall provide informational materials about events and opportunities planned and prepared under this paragraph to the department of public instruction for distribution to public, private, and tribal elementary and secondary schools.

(b) Each public elementary or secondary school, including each charter school, shall provide at least one event or educational opportunity under par. (a) to pupils in the 2025-26 school year.

(c) For each public elementary or secondary school in a school district, the school board of the school district and, for each charter school established under s. 118.40 (2r) or (2x), the operator of the charter school shall report to the department of public instruction the event or educational opportunity that the school held to satisfy the requirement under par. (b). By no later than September 1, 2026, the department of public instruction shall compile and submit to the commission the information the department of public instruction received under this paragraph.

(4) (a) The department and the state historical society shall work together to support the commission in the performance of its functions.

(b) The state historical society shall, upon request of the commission, in accordance with its powers as described in s. 44.015 (8), contract with the Wisconsin Historical Foundation, Inc., for the purpose of providing support to the commission in performance of its functions of accepting donations, making procurements, expending funds, and entering into contracts, leases, or other agreements.

(c) Upon request of the commission, any state agencies, as defined in s. 20.001 (1), shall cooperate with the commission in the performance of its functions.

(5) The commission may do any of the following:



(a) Accept donations, make procurements, and expend funds.

(b) Designate special committees with representatives from federal, state, local, and private groups to plan, develop, and coordinate specific activities.

(c) Enter into contracts, leases, or other agreements.

(d) Assume such other functions authorized by law as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this section.

(e) Appoint such committees as may be required to carry out its functions.

(6) (a) No later than one year after the effective date of this paragraph [LRB inserts date], and annually thereafter until 2027, the commission shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature under s. 13.172 (2) that contains all of the following:

1. The commission's recommendations to comply with this section.

2. A detailed timeline through 2027 of the plans for all events.

3. An accounting of all expenses incurred per year, all funds expended per year, and all donations, grants, or other moneys received per year by the commission in developing the program.

4. Any recommendations for legislation necessary to implement any aspect of the program.

5. A report on all activities and events that occurred each year.

6. Information received from the department of public instruction under sub. (3) (c).

(b) No later than January 1, 2027, the commission shall complete its duties and submit a final report to the governor and the legislature under s. 13.172 (2). The final report shall contain an accounting of all funds expended and received and all activities and events. The commission shall cease to exist on January 1, 2027, and shall disburse any of its property to federal, state, local, and private entities.

APPENDIX B – COMMISSION LEADERSHIP

CHRISTOPHER L. KOLAKOWSKI, COMMISSION CHAIR



Christopher L. Kolakowski is the Director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, an educational activity of the Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs. As the Director, he is responsible for the award-winning museum and research center that acknowledges, commemorates, and affirms the role of Wisconsin veterans in the United States of America's military past and present.

Chris has a BA in History and Mass Communications from Emory & Henry College and an MA in Public History from the State University of New York at Albany. He is a proud descendent of Wisconsin Veterans from the Civil War through the Cold War.

Chris has spent his career interpreting and preserving American military history with the National Park Service, the New York State government, the Rensselaer County (NY) Historical Society, the Civil War Preservation Trust, Kentucky State Parks, the U.S. Army, and the MacArthur Memorial. He has written and spoken extensively on various aspects of military history and leadership from 1775 to the present and was the inaugural Director of the General George Patton Museum and Center of Leadership at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Chris has published three books on the Civil War and two on World War II in the Pacific. He is a reviewer and contributor to the *Air Force Journal of Indo-Pacific Studies* and a Senior Fellow at the Consortium of Indo-Pacific Researchers. His latest book, *Nations in the Balance*, was released in March 2022 and is about the 1944 India-Burma battles.

ABOUT THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Created in 1945, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), provides grants and a variety of services to eligible Wisconsin veterans and their families under several programs, which include the Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries, Veterans Administration Regional Claims Office, Military Funeral Honors Program, Veterans Assistance Program, Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program, Veterans Housing and Recovery Program, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, and Wisconsin Veterans Homes. These programs are designed to provide health, educational assistance, economic assistance, and other services to specified veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

The WDVA is led by the executive leadership team of Secretary James Bond, Deputy Secretary Christopher McElgunn, and Assistant Deputy Secretary Joseph Hoey. The Department's organizational structure includes the Office of the Secretary, Office of Public Affairs, Office of Legal Counsel, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, and the Divisions of Enterprise Services, Veterans Benefits, and Veterans Homes. Additionally, the department receives advice from a nine-member, part-time, citizen advisory Board of Veterans Affairs. For more information visit wisvets.com.

CHRISTIAN W. ØVERLAND, COMMISSION VICE CHAIR



Christian W. Øverland is the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Wisconsin Historical Society, which is considered one of the nation's finest historical institutions. Christian spearheads the Society's mission to connect people to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. Under his leadership, the Society has energized public support for a world-class history center that is set to open in 2027 and is currently in the design phase following recent approval from the State Building Commission. Before joining the Wisconsin Historical Society in 2018, Christian was the Executive Vice President and Chief Historian at The Henry Ford, an internationally recognized history destination in Dearborn, Michigan. He also served as the chairperson on the board of directors for the museum's high school, Henry Ford Academy. Øverland earned his undergraduate degree in American Studies and Art History at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis and his master's degree in American History and Museum Studies at the State University of New York College at Oneonta and New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown, New York. Christian has received many awards for his work and contributions throughout his career, including a National Honor Award for a New Century of Service by the U.S.

Forest Service, two Outstanding Achievement awards from the Themed Entertainment Association as well as a Dibner Award for Excellence in Museum Exhibitions, given out by the Society for the History of Technology. Christian is a member of the Governor's Council on Tourism in Wisconsin.

ABOUT THE WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active, and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs, and services. For more information, visit wisconsinhistory.org.

APPENDIX C – COMMISSION MEMBERS

POSITION (S. 15.495, WIS. STATS.)	COMMISSIONER NAME & TITLE
Director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum	Christopher Kolakowski, Commission Chair Director of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society	Christian Øverland, Commission Vice Chair Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society
Assembly Speaker	Rep. Joseph Knilans Designee of the Assembly Speaker
Senate President	Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara Designee of the Senate President
Senate Majority Leader	Sen. Joan Ballweg Designee of the Senate Majority Leader
Senate Minority Leader	Sen. Janet Bewley Designee of the Senate Minority Leader
Assembly Majority Leader	Rep. Karen Hurd Designee of the Assembly Majority Leader
Assembly Minority Leader	Rep. Don Vruwink Designee of the Assembly Minority Leader
Governor	Zachary Madden Designee of the Governor
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court	Judge Randy Koschnick Designee of the Chief Justice
Director of the Tourism Federation of Wisconsin	Julia Hertel Administrator of the Tourism Federation of Wisconsin
Member of a Federally Recognized American Indian tribe or band	Shannon Holsey President of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians
Member of the Wisconsin Society Daughters of the American Revolution	Gena Selby Wisconsin Society DAR 250
Member of the Wisconsin Society Sons of the American Revolution	Robert Haglund Chair of the Wisconsin Society SAR 250

APPENDIX D – COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

(As of November 1, 2024)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS	COMMITTEE
Christopher Kolakowski* Christian Øverland*	Executive Committee
Christopher Kolakowski* Randy Koschnick* Charles Mattison	Armed Services Commemoration Committee
Christian Øverland* Sen. Janet Bewley* Kristin Borst	Business Fund Committee
Sen. Rachel Cabral-Guevara* Sen. Joan Ballweg* Marcie Rainbolt	County and Local Government Committee
Rachel Byington Rep. Joseph Knilans* Rep. Don Vruwink*	Education Committee
Brooks Boyd Randall Blackdeer Shannon Holsey* Zachary Madden* Kimberlee McGeshick Bill Quackenbush	First Nations Committee
Cody Schreck Robert Haglund* Rachel Lange Gena Selby* George Tzougros	Local Historical Organization Committee
Julia Hertel* Ariana Beno* Ann Deuser	Outreach Committee

*Denotes Commission Member

Bold denotes Committee Chair

APPENDIX E – COMMISSION WORKGROUP

In accordance with s. 15.495 (1), Wis. Stats., as enacted by 2021 Wisconsin Act 95, the Wisconsin Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial Commission is administratively assigned to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA).

As provided for in s. 45.13 (4) (a), Wis. Stats., WDVA established a workgroup in early 2022 to assist with implementing the Commission's functions.

The workgroup, consisting of staff from WDVA and the Wisconsin Historical Society, provides administrative and technical support to the Commission, collaborates with other national and state organizations, organizes meetings and events, and coordinates communications, including the development of this annual report.

Chris Kolakowski, Director, Wisconsin Veterans Museum

Joey Hoey, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Kevin Hampton, Curator of History, Wisconsin Veterans Museum

Scott Sussman, Deputy Chief Legal Counsel, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Angela Titus, Assistant Deputy Director & Chief Program Officer, Wisconsin Historical Society

Mindy Allen, Office of the Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

