
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6040

AN ACT REQUIRING THE STATE COMMISSION ON CAPITOL PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION TO DEVELOP A PROCESS FOR ADDING STATUES TO THE STATE CAPITOL AND ESTABLISHING THE STATE HISTORICAL COMMISSION.

SUMMARY

This bill expands the State Capitol Preservation and Restoration Commission's duties by requiring it to develop a process for identifying and commissioning additional statues for the State Capitol building exterior to reflect the state's diversity, character, and accomplishments. It allows the Legislative Management Committee to use capital funds to implement this process.

The bill also requires the commission, by February 1, 2026, to (1) develop a plan for installing placards or other signs around the State Capitol Building's exterior to give the public a written historical explanation of the various statues and other markers on the building exterior and (2) submit the plan to the Legislative Management Committee.

Additionally, the bill creates a 14-member State Historical Commission to examine and make recommendations to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches on questions of memorialization and commemoration related to Connecticut and U.S. history. The commission's members are (1) certain public officers or (2) scholars in certain fields affiliated with an in-state higher education institution.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025, except that the provision requiring a plan for exterior signage takes effect upon passage.

IDENTIFYING AND COMMISSIONING ADDITIONAL STATUES

Existing law requires the State Capitol Preservation and Restoration Commission to continually review and study the State Capitol building

and grounds with a view to developing a master plan for preserving and restoring it consistent with the building's original historical character.

The bill requires the commission to develop a process for identifying and commissioning additional statues to for the State Capitol building exterior to reflect the state's diversity, character, and accomplishments. It allows the commission to consult with state, federal, or private agencies in developing the process.

The bill allows the Legislative Management Committee to undertake capital expenditure programs to implement this process. As under existing law, the committee may do so using capital funds and following (1) plans and specifications approved by the commission and (2) state bidding laws.

STATE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Membership

The bill establishes the commission as an independent body within the legislative branch for administrative purposes only. Under the bill, the commission's membership consists of the chief court administrator, or their designee, the state historian, and 12 appointed members as follows: (1) two by the governor and (2) one each by the six legislative leaders and the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee chairpersons and ranking members. Appointed members must be scholars in history, law, literature, or philosophy and affiliated with an in-state higher education institution. They may be legislators.

The bill requires that (1) initial appointments be made by September 1, 2025, and (2) the first meeting be held by September 15, 2025. Members serve three-year terms from their appointment date and continue to serve until the appointment of their successors. The appointing authority must fill any vacancy, and a vacancy occurring during a term must be filled for the rest of the unexpired term. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the chairperson, who must schedule the first meeting. A majority of the membership constitutes a quorum to transact business.

The bill requires that commission members serve without compensation but allows reimbursement for necessary expenses within available funds.

Powers and Duties

The bill authorizes the commission to:

1. issue reports and recommendations to all three branches of government on historical questions of memorialization and commemoration related to Connecticut and U.S. history, on its own initiative or upon request of an agency, department, board, or commission in any of the three branches;
2. obtain assistance and data from these government entities as necessary and available to carry out the commission's purposes;
3. accept any gift, donation, or bequest to perform its duties; and
4. perform other acts as may be necessary and appropriate to carry out its duties.

It requires the commission, starting by February 1, 2026, to report annually to the governor and GAE Committee. The report must include a summary of the commission's activities during the previous year and any policy or legislative changes needed to implement its recommendations. Finally, the bill requires the GAE Committee staff to serve as the commission's administrative staff.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/19/2025)