
HOUSE BILL 1339

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Representatives Young, J. Johnson, Simmons, Valdez, Shewmake, and Callan

Read first time 01/21/21. Referred to Committee on Community & Economic Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to commemorating Washington state founding father
2 George Washington Bush through art in the internal southern portico
3 of the legislative building; creating new sections; making an
4 appropriation; providing an expiration date; and declaring an
5 emergency.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes and honors
8 historical persons who have shaped Washington's cultural identity; it
9 is important that the state's full history and heritage is proudly
10 displayed, honored, and esteemed. The legislature therefore
11 recognizes one of the state's earliest pioneers and foremost founding
12 fathers, an American hero of Irish and African descent who pioneered
13 settlement of the Pacific Northwest, Mr. George Washington Bush.

14 George Washington Bush was an American military veteran who
15 served his country in the battle of New Orleans in 1815. He was later
16 a renowned frontiersman for the hudson bay company in what at the
17 time was known as the Oregon country in the Pacific Northwest. He is
18 the only veteran of the war of 1812 buried in Thurston county.

19 In 1844, Bush set out from Missouri on a wagon train destined for
20 the Pacific Northwest with his family and other settlers seeking
21 American prosperity and liberty. Upon concluding his trek along the

1 Oregon trail, to avoid discriminatory exclusion and antiblack "lash
2 laws" in Oregon, Bush crossed the Columbia river into territory
3 claimed by both the United States and Great Britain. Bush became one
4 of the first black landowners in the Washington territory, where he
5 operated the most productive homestead and farm in the area, Bush
6 prairie. This homestead served as the first nonnative American
7 settlement in the territory, later known as Tumwater, and played a
8 major role in establishing Olympia as the future capital of this
9 state. Furthermore, Bush grew and operated it in such an enterprising
10 and charitable way, which the legislature intends to note,
11 distinguish, and edify, so as to prove vital and foundational to the
12 United States' successfully claiming Washington as part of its
13 territory.

14 Bush's son, William, was also significant to the political
15 heritage of this state. In addition to continuing his father's
16 charitable running of Bush prairie, William Owen Bush was elected to
17 the first state legislature in 1889 to represent Thurston county.
18 Most notably, William introduced the bill that established Washington
19 State University in March 1890.

20 George Washington Bush pioneered notions and actions of racial
21 unity and laid the foundation for racial equality in our state of
22 Washington. He was a man of great Christian ethic and character in
23 the face of discrimination and prejudice, and he lived this out
24 through a demonstration of grace by which every Washington state
25 citizen can be proud. Bypassing numerous opportunities to enrich
26 himself, George Washington Bush welcomed all and unselfishly gave
27 provision and shelter to any who sought his help. His actions, the
28 legislature finds, directly led to greater American settlement in the
29 area, as word spread of his generosity and welcoming nature. The
30 legislature further finds that Bush's actions and reputation were a
31 beacon for those looking to leave behind racial discrimination and
32 bigotry and thus played the preeminent role in strengthening
33 America's claim to the territory northwest of the Columbia river in
34 subsequent negotiations with Great Britain.

35 It is therefore the legislature's intent to recognize Mr. George
36 Washington Bush through art and a bust displayed in the south portico
37 of the legislative building on the capitol campus.

1 NEW SECTION.

2 **Sec. 2.**

3 (1)(a) A task force on commemorating
4 George Washington Bush through art is established, with members as
5 provided in this subsection.

6 (i) The president of the senate shall appoint one member from
7 each of the two largest caucuses in the senate.

8 (ii) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint
9 one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of
10 representatives.

11 (iii) The four legislative members jointly shall appoint one
12 member representing the Washington state arts commission.

13 (b) The task force shall choose its chair from among its
14 legislative membership. The chair shall convene the initial meeting
15 of the task force.

16 (2) The task force shall:

17 (a) Develop criteria for the Washington state arts commission to
18 select a bust of George Washington Bush and six pieces of art, either
19 preexisting or commissioned for this purpose, to paint or permanently
20 place on display in the open spaces of the south portico of the
21 legislative building, within the following constraints:

22 (i) The center-left image must be of George Washington Bush;

23 (ii) The center-right image must be of his son, William Owen
24 Bush;

25 (iii) The far-left image must be of the pioneer and founder of
26 Centralia, George Washington, with his Centralia homestead; and

27 (iv) The total cost for the bust and the six pieces of art, and
28 their installation, may not exceed \$250,000; and

29 (b) Consider whether the state should commission a statue of
30 George Washington Bush for display in the national statuary hall
31 collection in Washington, D.C.

32 (3) Staff support for the task force shall be provided by the
33 Washington state arts commission.

34 (4) Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for
35 travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative
36 members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they
37 are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer,
38 governmental entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for
39 other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter 43.03 RCW.

40 (5) The expenses of the task force shall be paid jointly by the
senate and the house of representatives. Task force expenditures are
subject to approval by the senate facilities and operations committee

1 and the house executive rules committee, or their successor
2 committees.

3 (6) The task force shall report its recommendations to the
4 appropriate committees of the legislature by August 31, 2021.

5 (7) This section expires November 1, 2021.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The sum of \$250,000, or as much thereof as
7 may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30,
8 2022, from the general fund to the Washington state arts commission
9 for the purposes of this act.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act is necessary for the immediate
11 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
12 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
13 effect immediately.

--- END ---