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REPORT TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

Preparations for the United States Semiquincentennial

April 2023



ARCHITECT
OF THE CAPITOL

Preparations for the United States Semiquincentennial

This report details the Architect of the Capitol's plans for commemorating the U.S. Semiquincentennial.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chere Rexroat', with a stylized, cursive script.

Chere Rexroat, RA
Acting Architect of the Capitol

Introduction

This report is provided to the congressional appropriations committees, the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration as directed on page 28 of House Report 117-389 accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023:

Preparing for the United States Semiquincentennial: In 2026, the United States will be celebrating its Semiquincentennial; marking 250 years since the nation was founded in 1776. Over the course of that time, our nation has grown from the original 13 colonies to the patchwork of 50 states and over 330 million individuals it is today. As we approach this historic milestone, it is an opportunity to commemorate our past, honor our present, and look toward the future. In preparation for this historic event, the Committee directs the AOC to submit a report 120 days after the enactment of this legislation on how they plan to commemorate the Semiquincentennial on the Capitol Complex. The report should include suggested plans for events and installations that can be made available to the public who visit. Along with that, the report should include a section on the possibility of a Congressional Time Capsule being buried somewhere on the Capitol Complex that will remain sealed until July 4th, 2276. This report shall be delivered to the Committee on Appropriation as well as the Committee on House Administration. This report should also be made available on the Architect of the Capitol's website.

Executive Summary

This report responds to the congressional directive to provide suggested plans for events and installations that can be made available to the public who visit the Capitol complex during the U.S. Semiquincentennial.

Report

The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) through the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) will develop public programming to mark the semiquincentennial. These efforts will follow the precedents established with other commemorative events including the War of 1812 bicentennial, the 19th Amendment centennial and the Olmsted 200 project. The AOC also will seek to amplify the themes and ideas recommended by the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission.

As part of these efforts, the founding period of our nation's history will be emphasized on the Capitol Tour. There are several items related to the American Revolution in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda and the Capitol Crypt. The Capitol Crypt includes statues of five signers of the Declaration of Independence, and three Continental Army generals. The Rotunda features the "Declaration of Independence" painting as well as several other works of art dealing with Founding Fathers and events during the American Revolution. National Statuary Hall, the Old Senate Chamber and the Old Supreme Court Chamber also provide opportunities to discuss how Congress debated and discussed the principles that guided the Founding Fathers.

Work will be done to link the themes of the founding of the United States of America to the various specialty tours. This could be done, for example, by making the connection between the themes of each tour and the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

An online, 360 experience focused on detailing the stories behind John Trumbull's paintings in the Rotunda will be produced. These paintings all focus on the Revolutionary War period. The AOC will further look at the possibilities for other online programming to develop semiquincentennial themes, including through the CVC's Capitol Conversations program.

Education programs will highlight semiquincentennial themes. This will likely include one-day special programs on significant anniversary dates on the road to independence as well as adaptations of standing programs designed to highlight themes related to the founding of the nation.

A special exhibit in the Exhibition Hall's rotating gallery will focus on the legacy of 1776 in the work of Congress will also be explored.

Should Congress wish to create a time capsule, the AOC will determine the proper location for its burial on the Capitol complex as well as an appropriate receptacle to hold the items Congress wishes to include in this project.

Conclusion

The AOC will work to ensure a broad range of public programming that commemorates the U.S. Semiquincentennial. The CVC will follow the procedures used for other important historic commemorations, tailoring its ongoing efforts to inform, involve and inspire every visitor to the U.S. Capitol. Semiquincentennial themes and ideas will be incorporated as appropriate into tours, education programs and online activities. Support will be provided to find an appropriate receptacle and location for any time capsule Congress desires.

Distribution

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