



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## New York State Lawmakers Pass The New York State 250th Commemoration Act

SHELLEY B. MAYER June 10, 2021

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(Albany, NY) – In the final week of legislative session, The New York State 250th Commemoration Act, which was sponsored by Senator Shelley B. Mayer and Assemblymember Carrie Woerner, and is part of a national effort to commemorate the founding of the United States, passed in both the Senate and the Assembly. The bill, S. 4410C/A. 4742B, passed unanimously in both houses.

When enacted, this legislation will create the New York State 250th Commemoration Commission to develop a plan to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, and establish the 250th Commemoration Commission Fund.

The thirteen-member commission will be co-chaired by the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Commissioner of the Department of Education, or their designees, and include the New York State Historian as well as stakeholders from across the state with knowledge of history, historic preservation and tourism. They will support and facilitate local efforts by heritage organizations, municipalities and others in commemorative planning and programs.

There will be a focus on the narratives and ensuing struggles of women, people of African descent and indigenous people, whose freedoms and rights during the revolution were far from complete.

The fund's creation is essential for the state to be eligible to receive funds from the federal Semiquincentennial Commission, created in 2016, and the America250 Foundation, the official nonprofit partner and operational arm of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission.

Earlier this year, Senator Mayer secured \$50,000 in the 2021-2022 New York State budget for a commission to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution.

**Senator Shelley B. Mayer** said: "I am pleased to have sponsored the New York State 250th Commemoration Act, which was unanimously passed by my colleagues in the Senate. I will continue to work with advocates throughout New York to provide communities and non-

profits with the tools they need to plan for New York's Semiquincentennial in 2026 and beyond, and especially to highlight the critical role that Westchester played during the Revolutionary period. The 250th anniversary offers a wonderful opportunity to educate and inspire New Yorkers about our region's preeminent role in the American Revolution, subsequent civil rights struggles and the state and nation's complex history, as we continually push closer and more inclusively towards the ideals of our founding. I want to thank Majority Leader and my Westchester colleague Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, for her support in providing necessary funding for this critical project and allowing this bill to move ahead."

**Assemblymember Carrie Woerner** said: "I am proud and excited that with this legislation New York State will have the framework to plan programs and projects that will recognize the birth of this nation nearly 250 years ago. These benchmarks in time are occasions to celebrate but also to contemplate the enormity of our mutual undertaking to form and nurture a nation that is utterly unique. We can lead the way in this national celebration as New York is emblematic of the diversity of the American experience, encompassing indigenous American nations, the sites of several pivotal events in the birth of the nation, abolitionists and the underground railroad, the crucible of woman's suffrage, urban immigrants, and generational custodians of farmland, vineyards, and orchards."

**Chairman of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission Daniel DiLella** said: "The Commission and Foundation are encouraging each state and territory to establish its own official 250th entity to plan for this momentous milestone. We look forward to working closely with New York's commission, as we are with other state commissions, to build an engaging and inspiring commemoration."

The legislation includes a commitment to economic development through active support for

heritage tourism and other local business initiatives, thus generating tax revenues and supporting the local taxpayers.

**Saratoga County Historian Lauren Roberts** said: "Passing this legislation is tremendously important for Saratoga County. The most internationally significant historical event to ever happen within our borders was the surrender of Burgoyne's Army after the Battles of Saratoga, the Turning Point of the American Revolution. The creation of the NYS 250th Commission will aid local historians and historical sites in commemorating these important events. These types of anniversaries often bring our past to the present, encouraging the public to become engaged with our history and celebrate our sense of place. Many thanks to Assemblywoman Woerner for sponsoring this legislation and working diligently to get it passed."

**President and CEO of the Fort Ticonderoga Association Beth Hill** said: "The War for Independence was the critical event in our nation's history and New York was the epicenter of conflict. During our national 250th commemoration, Fort Ticonderoga in partnership with New York State, looks forward to sharing this epic story, generating significant economic impact through expanded heritage tourism, and placing New York at the center of our national celebration and commemoration."

**Revolutionary Westchester 250 President Constance Kehoe** said: "I'm thrilled that since 2018 there has been such grassroots interest in the special history of the American Revolution in Westchester County and that now, thanks to the work of Senator Mayer and others, New York State has a 250th Commission. This makes it possible for local groups and local businesses to work in sync with the state and federal efforts."

**Westchester County Executive George Latimer** said: "Westchester County has a special place in

the history of the American Revolution. History – literally – happened in our backyard. This is a history my Administration takes very seriously – which is why we re-built the historic Elijah Miller House, where General Washington planned the Battle of White Plains, as an ode to our past and an opportunity to learn from it for future generations. As we approach the 250th anniversary, commemorating and celebrating those events – and the people involved – is both an educational and an economic opportunity.”

**Director of Westchester County Tourism & Film Natasha Caputo** said: “Historical sites and experiences are an important draw for tourism, so we’re excited that Westchester County and Revolutionary Westchester 250 are collaborating to make this anniversary come alive in the County and throughout New York.”

**Westchester County Legislator MaryJane Shimsky** said: “Thank you to Senator Mayer and her colleagues in the State Legislature for approving the creation of the commission to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation. New York played a unique role in the 6-year struggle, from the strategically vital locations of Saratoga and West Point to the use of Westchester County as a staging area for the final, victorious march to Yorktown. The diversity and fractiousness of the local population also made New York City and the surrounding Counties a proving ground for what it would mean to be an American. New York has a great story to tell, and will attract millions of visitors – tourists, history buffs and scholars alike – in 2026 as well as the years leading to the anniversary. The commission will provide our State with the means to promote our past and interest the world in our future.”