

America 250 Oregon Commission Minutes of Meeting on June 20, 2025

Opening Comments and Attendance

Chair Tymchuk called the meeting to order at 1:15pm and welcomed commissioners and the public.

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Todd Braje, Secretary of State Tobias Read, First Lady Aimee Kotek Wilson, Brad Parker, Mickie Derting, Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong, Katie Henry, Chrissy Curran, Sophorn Cheang, Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner, Lisa Itel, Dr. Nakeia Daniels, Shana McConville Radford, Alisha Babbstein.

Chair Tymchuk began with a brief summary on where to find America 250 Oregon information, highlighting the website, email address, and Oregon 250 E-newsletter.

Budget Updates:

The Senate bill that established the Commission allocated \$250,000 to the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) to support the Commission's responsibilities, as well as \$10,000 from the Federal Commission.

The majority of these funds were used for website development, accessibility features, and post-launch support. Funding also supported the creation of two digital exhibitions — *The Power of Place*, and *The Pursuit of Happiness*, — which have since been adapted into traveling exhibitions available to rent at no cost through 2025.

As of now, \$43,667.57 remains. Chair Tymchuk has submitted a request to the State Legislature for additional funding to support activities in 2026.

Website Update:

The Oregon 250 website launched earlier this year, and new resources have been added since its debut. These include a statewide calendar of events, information about Oregon's tribal nations, educator resources, and a news and press section. Additional content will continue to be added over time.

Oregon Historical Society 250 Programs and Events:

Chair Tymchuk shared several upcoming events that OHS is hosting in connection with America 250, including the Mark O. Hatfield Lecture series, which kicks off in fall 2025

with Doris Kearns Goodwin. The 2026 lineup features acclaimed authors Keisha N. Blain, Michael Luo, Megan Kate Nelson, and Rick Atkinson.

OHS also recently opened its showcase exhibition for the semiquincentennial, *The Yasui Family: An American Story*, on view from June 13, 2025, through September 6, 2026. The exhibition explores the experiences of the Yasui Family, a Japanese American family from Hood River, Oregon, who were incarcerated during World War II.

America 250 Oregon Upcoming Programs and Events:

America 250 Oregon Commission is participating in a variety of local and national initiatives leading up to the semiquincentennial:

- **Traveling Exhibitions — *The Power of Place & The Pursuit of Happiness*:** These exhibitions are available to rent free of charge through 2025.
- ***Moments that Made Us*:** A free, customizable, print-on-demand exhibition exploring the core ideas of the Declaration of Independence. Developed through a multi-state collaboration, it includes 21 ready-to-use panels. More details will be available by the fall of 2025, with downloadable files in early 2026.
- **Ken Burns Live in Portland — *The American Revolution*:** This special event will feature selections from Ken Burns' newest documentary and a behind-the-scenes conversation hosted by OPB with Ken Burns and historian Alan Taylor. This event is on July 15, 2025 at Revolution Hall. The documentary series is set to premiere on OPB TV on November 16, 2025.
- **Sharing the Spirit of America:** A nationwide, simultaneous reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 2026, led by America 250 Hawaii.
- **America's Potluck:** A community-building event led by America 250 Utah, encouraging neighbors to gather for a shared meal on Sunday, July 5, 2026, to foster connection and belonging.
- **Two Lights for Tomorrow:** A commemorative event initiated by America 250 Virginia and held on April 18, 2025. Oregon 250 participated by illuminating two symbolic lights at homes, The Oregon Historical Society, and the State Capitol building.

America 250 Oregon Proposals:

Chair Tymchuk presented a proposal from The Immigrant Story, an organization that OHS has partnered with previously and hosted several of their exhibitions.

The organization is seeking funding for a new project focused on collecting, documenting, and preserving oral histories of diverse cultural leaders. The project includes a multimedia component featuring a stage performance, a storytelling podcast, and a public exhibition.

Commissioners engaged in discussion around the proposal. Chair Tymchuk will follow up with The Immigrant Story to gather additional information.

America 250 Oregon 250 Commission Discussion:

Chair Tymchuk reiterated the Commission's mission and guideposts before opening the floor for discussion.

Topics included establishing a formal process for reviewing and accepting proposals, strategies for engaging youth and multigenerational audiences across Oregon, and opportunities to connect with families at the Oregon State Fair.

Commissioners also emphasized the importance of intentional language. There was consensus around using terminology that is clear, accessible, inclusive, and respectful, recognizing that the Commission's language choices will help shape its legacy.

The conversation concluded with suggestions for partnering with specific groups across the state, including the Oregon National Guard, Civics Learning Project, Oregon Poetry Association, Oregon Humanities, and the Youth Advisory Council.

Public Comment:

David Witter, representing the Sons of the America Revolution, updated the Commission on the Revolutionary War Memorial planned for Beaverton Veterans Memorial Park. Core funding for the project has been secured, and the target dedication date is April 19, 2026. He shared that a number of related events are being planned and expressed interest in partnering with the Commission on these efforts.

Kim Grupel, CEO of the Oregon State Fair and Exposition, is excited to collaborate with the Oregon 250 Commission on outreach during the State Fair. She emphasized opportunities to educate the public about the semiquincentennial.

Jennifer Gritt from the Woodburn Museum shared their organization holds a collection of oral histories from the area's diverse communities, along with a list of individuals they

hope to interview. She asked whether there has been consideration of incorporating existing oral histories into The Immigrant Story proposal, or if the focus is solely on collecting new ones. This prompted discussion among commissioners on the importance of preserving and elevating community oral histories.

Conclusion:

Without further business, Chair Tymchuk adjourned the meeting at 2:45pm.