



THE OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
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**Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs
Testimony of Kerry Tymchuk on SB 1531
February 8, 2024**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Kerry Tymchuk, and it's my privilege to serve as Executive Director of the Oregon Historical Society. Founded in 1898, OHS is the designated steward of Oregon's history. Our mission is to preserve our state's history and make it accessible to everyone in ways that advance knowledge and inspire curiosity about all the people, places and events that have shaped Oregon.

I am here this morning in support of Senate Bill 1531, which I am confident in saying is a bill that makes history, in that it is the first bill ever to include the word "semiquincentennial." What that word refers to, of course, is the fact that on July 4, 2026, the United States of America will celebrate our 250th birthday.

In preparation for this date, the United States Congress passed legislation establishing the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and urged each state to create or designate an official entity to organize that state's planning and programming for this commemoration. With passage of SB 1531, Oregon will become the 42nd state to create such a commission.

SB 1531 assigns a lead role to the Oregon Historical Society in assisting the Commission in their work, and names the OHS Executive Director as Chairman. I can assure you that both OHS and I will be honored to fulfill these responsibilities.

The Semiquincentennial Commission, its nonprofit partner, the America 250 Foundation, and organizations like the American Association of State and Local History are serving as clearinghouses, sharing best practices and successful programs from across the country. I would anticipate that Oregon will also remain true to our state motto of "She flies with her own wings," and commemorate America's 250th in our own unique way.

Mr. Chairman should SB 1531 be approved and signed into law, I would envision that the remainder of this year would be dedicated to hearing from the Commissioners, heritage organizations across our state, Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes, and all interested Oregonians as to what an Oregon 250 commemoration should include.

SB 1531 appropriates \$250,000 to fund these efforts, and with passage of this legislation, Oregon 250 will also be eligible to receive funding and grants from the America 250 Foundation.

It would be my goal that when we reach July 4, 2026, Oregonians will say that our state's commemoration of America 250 engaged and united all generations in learning and reflecting on the full sweep of America's history; stressed the importance of history and civics education in our schools; honored the contributions that Oregon and Oregonians have made to American history; highlighted the work of Oregon's many history museums and heritage organizations, and encouraged and inspired all of us to participate in and shape the ongoing American experiment.