

ILLINOIS AMERICA 250 COMMISSION MEETING

February 2, 2025, 2 p.m. Webex

Attending:

Officer: Chair Gabrielle (Gabe) Lyon; Commission Members: Brad Cole, Michelle Donahoe, Jenn Edginton, Lindsay Laren, Elisa Marcus, Sara Phalen, Kayla Pilgrim, Christina Shutt, Dick Simpson, Gerald Savage, ; State of Illinois employees: Jayette Bolinski, Joel Sachnoff; members of the public: Aaron Horath, Erin Drain

- I. **Welcome** Chair Gabe Lyon called the meeting to order
- II. **Roll Call** Joel Sachnoff called the roll, and the majority of a quorum was present. Dick Simpson commented that it was very difficult getting into the meeting the way it was sent.
- III. **New Business**
 - a. Chair's Update
 - i. Gabe welcomed the commissioners to the meeting, reminded them that the anniversary is hurtling along, and thanked them for their patience as they had to reschedule the planned in-person meeting. Gabe said the meeting would recap the status of signature projects and allow time for Commissioners to share out. Gabe shared an anecdote about speaking at the Peoria Riverfront Museum in her role as Chair, complimenting their exhibits and thanking Christina Shutt for representing the Commission in the museum's programming. Gabe encouraged Commissioners to visit and noted that the exhibits uplift under told stories, one of the goals of the Commission.
 - ii. Gabe discussed signature programs: ALPLM Youth Art competition, Illinois United in Service, the Passport, and Illinois Voices, and asked Commissioners to think about which programs they want to get involved with in their communities.
 - iii. Because the January 19th meeting plan included a presentation from Jacob Jenkins of Serve Illinois, the Chair asked Joel Sachnoff to give an overview of the program. Joel gave examples of different volunteer opportunities and discussed how to sign up online so that the efforts of IL volunteers could be tracked. Gabe thanked Joel and reminded the Commission that this is a way to honor different groups including veterans. Christina asked a question about how to submit hours, and Gabe referred her to meet with Jacob for a tutorial. Gabe mentioned that the program was announced via press release on Martin Luther

King, Jr. day in January 2026 and Erin shared the press release in the chat.

- iv. Gabe invited Elisa Marcus to present the Passport program. She mentioned the team had been working feverishly for months on it. Elisa explained the selection of the sites in that they reflect the ideals of the Declaration of Independence or connect to commission themes and notes that the passport is not comprehensive so it links back to the Enjoy Illinois site for more information. Gabe shared slides showing the passport. Elisa explains that the passport pages can be printed or added to websites. Gabe explains the entities who will be distributing the passports: Illinois Humanities, Illinois Association of Museums, highway visitor bureaus, CVBs, IDNR sites, public libraries thanks to the partnership with the secretary of state's office. Gabe thanks Jenn and Sara for their contributions. Brad Cole thanks all who worked on it and compliments the passport.
- v. Gabe describes the Illinois Voices program and that the hope is to have participation from all 102 counties.

b. Commissioner Report Outs

- i. Gabe asks Jenn to share about Illinois History Day. Jenn describes the program and that it is a big undertaking for the Illinois State Museum. Gabe notes that volunteering as a judge can count as volunteer hours for the service initiative. Dick Simpson shares about the iCivics group and a proclamation introduced in the Illinois Senate, 5705. Dick asks Joel if the governor will make a similar proclamation and says it is particularly important. Dick describes the organization's time capsule plan to be opened in 2035. Dick also mentions a push to plant heritage trees. Dick describes two events happening at University of Illinois Chicago, a conference on April 13th and an event with the Society of Midland authors. Dick mentions 2 upcoming events he feels the commission should be involved with: a conference of state legislators and a conference of social studies teachers. Joel is able to respond to Dick's question about the governor's proclamation, says it's a reasonable request, and that he will bring it up with the governor's team. Brad Cole responds to Dick's question about expanding the time capsule and notes that anyone can make their own time capsule, and that his with IML will be opened in 50 years and makes a joke. Gabe asks everyone to take it down a notch and comments that the conversation reminds her that there are many

resources available, that the Commission did a lot of prework and cites Lindsay's working group of the librarians. Gabe notes that it can feel like there is a question of what is the Commission doing but cites the many resources, such as 9000 copies of the Declaration of Independence, that the Commission is providing, cites Brad's time capsule, to say that the Commission has curated a very valuable set of resources for the anniversary. Gabe once again invites Commissioners to decide what they want to engage with over the coming months. Gabe invites Michelle to speak about education developments. Michelle describes the work that Mary Ellen Daniels of Illinois Civics Hub has been doing to host events and create a resource kit that can be added to IL250.org. Christina shares an update from ALPLM that is a partnership with More Perfect where people can vote for their favorite 100 documents in history and starting on Presidents Day will be releasing information about presidents every week, focusing on character and core values. Christina notes that the information about Lincoln will come from President Barack Obama and shares links in the chat.

- ii. Gabe opens it up for open discussion and says there will be a follow up email. She asks if any agenda points are missing.

IV. IV. Old Business None given.

V. V. Public Comment Gabe opens for public comment. Gerald Savage mentions that SNAP benefits now have volunteer requirements and that he will be able to get volunteers engaged because of this. Joel reads a comment from Aaron Horath that states that he is from the Department of Revenue and thanking the commission. Joel then reads the statement, which says, "I'm with Illinois Department of Revenue. I assist our Chief of staff, Jim Nickelson, and was designated the agency contact for America 250, just listening in and trying to get a good idea of what our agency might be able to do to align. Thank you."

VI. VI. Adjournment: Joel reminds the Commissioners that there needs to be an official vote. Gabe calls for a motion. Sara Phalen moves to adjourn, Dorene Wiese seconds. Gabe adjourns the meeting.