

ILLINOIS AMERICA 250 COMMISSION MEETING

March 30th, 2026, 2:03 p.m. WebEx

Attending:

Officers: Chair Gabrielle (Gabe) Lyon, Comm. Michelle Donahoe, Comm. Elisa Marcus, Comm. Sara Phalen, Comm. Gerald Savage, Comm. Christina Shutt, Comm. Dick Simpson, Comm. Andy Van Meter, Comm. Judy Hackett. State Employees: Joel Sachnoff, Toby Trimmer, Tanner Edwards, Jayette Bolinski. Members of the Public: 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.
- III. **New Business**
 - a. Chair's Update
 - i. Chair Lyon said the goal of the meeting was to gather Commissioners priorities for the remainder of the 250th year.
 - ii. Chair acknowledged that both Senator Turner and Rep. Gonzalez have advanced resolutions in their respective chambers encouraging people to support the 250th. She noted there was no appropriation tied to it, but was still in the spirit of the Commission.
 - iii. Chair Lyon noted the increased press being paid attention to the 250th recently
 - iv. Elisa Marcus mentioned the 250th feature in the most recent Enjoy Illinois magazine.
 - b. PowerPoint Presentation
 - i. Chair Lyon and Erin Drain shared a PowerPoint presentation and the results of a poll of community partners about their plans for the 250th
 - ii. 46% of respondents said newsletters and monthly partner calls were the best way they found to engage with the Commission
 - iii. 44% said IL250 Commission visibility and promotion statewide would make the biggest difference to their community
 - iv. Comm. Donahoe remarked that marketing is important and doable, especially since people are asking for it.
 - c. Comm. Van Meter talked about whether Sangamon County can use the IL250 Logo to make a flag and fly it.
 - i. Chair Lyon said yes for non-commercial purposes
 - ii. Chair Lyon noted that use of the America 250 logo requires someone to sign up as a partner and clear the use with A250 and IL250
 - d. Comm. Simpson asked for 50 copies of the Declaration of Independence

- e. Chair Lyon mentioned that demand for the Passport to Illinois is high, but that we're behind on printing.
 - i. She was hoping to have 80-90000 ready by now.
 - ii. Comm. Phalen asked if she'd have Passports ready by Easter and Chair Lyon said yes
 - iii. Comm. Marcus seconded how much demand for the Passports DCEO is getting.
- f. Illinois Voices 250
 - i. Chair Lyon announced a program where Illinoisans can be interviewed and have those interviews documented in the Library of Congress
 - ii. Comm. Simpson asked if there would be a link people go to record these stories? Or would there be a physical recorder? Chair Lyon said there will be a link online at IL250.org using the Story Corps platform.
 - iii. Chair Lyon mentioned having pop-up recording booths throughout the state including at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.
 - iv. Chair Lyon said the goal is to have voices from all 102 counties and all communities and she's hopeful that the Commissioners can help contact hard-to-reach places and peoples.
 - v. Comm. Shutt mentioned she'd done something similar with the Society of American Archivists, particularly archivists of color
- g. Commissioner Survey
 - i. Chair Lyon and Erin Drain shared a survey for Commissioners
 - ii. The first question was regarding which signature program (Illinois United in Service, Passport to Illinois, Illinois Voices 250) Commissioners were most interested in being involved with. The goal would be to have Commissioners able to talk to communities and press about their signature program
 - 1. Chair Lyon noted that Illinois Voices 250 and the Passport were the most popular
 - 2. Comm. Phalen asked if we were tracking statistics for the Commission especially regarding engagement.
 - 3. Comm. Simpson suggested creating a special collections archive site for the Commission to store their work. He said we could go through Chicago Collections to make it easier.
 - iii. The 2nd question was regarding plans for July 4th. Comm. Donahoe said DeKalb County is doing many events including the reading aloud of the Declaration of Independence at their courthouse on July 8th, and

that they aren't trying to compete with existing July 4th events like parades. Comm. Shutt said they'd have special documents on display and a potential concert in their park. Comm. Van Meter said that Sangamon County had existing July 4th events and a committee that was coming up with "unique" plans.

- h. Chair Lyon asked Commissioners what the group should be thinking of between now and the end of July. Comm. Shutt mentioned the marketing and illuminating what is already being done. She mentioned amplifying stories from smaller-population communities.
 - i. Chair Lyon encouraged Commissioners to look through the community events listed on the website and see if there's anything or anyone missing.
- i. Erin Drain mentioned that next Commission meetings will be May 4th, June 29th, July 27th, and September 28th.

IV. **Public Comment**

- a. Chair Lyon opened up the meeting for public comment but there were no public comments
- b. Comm. Simpson mentioned that Gabe would be at the UofI Faculty Symposium, on April 15th there will an event with the Society of Midland Authors called "The Unfinished Revolution," and he got the University of Illinois Press to put together a list of 250th-related books including a free copy of his book. Comm. Simpson sees oral history as a post-July event and he wants to plan townhall meetings similar to what was done during the 200th

V. **Adjournment**

- a. Chair Lyon asked for a motion to adjourn, Comm. Hackett made the motion, and it was seconded by Comm. Savage and the meeting was adjourned at 2:54pm.