

## **Interim Activity of the Commission for Historical Statues in the U.S. Capitol**

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Date of Report: July 27, 2020

Author: Department of Historic Resources

Enabling Authority: HB 1406, Chapter 1099 Virginia Acts of Assembly

Executive Summary: Pursuant to the powers and duties authorized under Chapter 1099 of the 2020 Virginia Acts of Assembly, The Virginia General Assembly created the Commission for Historical Statues in the United States Capitol and tasked it with studying the removal and replacement of the Robert E. Lee statue in the Capitol's National Statuary Hall Collection, where each state is entitled to have two statues. Virginia's other statue is of George Washington.

Commission Members: The commission consists of eight members. Governor Ralph Northam appointed Dr. Edward Ayres and Dr. Colita Fairfax. The Virginia Senate appointed Senator Louise Lucas, and the House of Delegates appointed Del. Jeion Ward. Three citizen members were elected at the Commission's first meeting: Dr. Fred Motley of Danville, Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe and a resident of Indian Neck, and Margaret "Margi" Vanderhye of McLean. Julie Langan, Director of the Department of Historic Resources, serves as an *ex-officio* member.

The Commission held two meetings during the month of July 2020. Both meetings were hosted by the Department of Historic Resources (DHR), the agency tasked with providing administrative support to the Commission. Both meetings were publicly noticed as required by the *Code of Virginia § 2.2-3707* and were held virtually due to the continuing State of Emergency declared by Governor Northam as authorized by and in compliance with § 4-0.01 of the 2020 Appropriations Act (HB 30, Chapter 1289). Both meetings were recorded.

Summary of July 1, 2020 meeting: During the Commission's first meeting, the four appointed members elected three citizen members: Dr. Fred Motley of Danville, Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe and a resident of Indian Neck, and Margaret "Margi" Vanderhye of McLean. The meeting was moderated by Julie Langan. Governor Northam provided brief remarks.

Summary of July 24, 2020 meeting: Senator Louise Lucas was elected Chair and Delegate Jeion Ward was elected Vice Chair. Director Langan provided an overview of the Commission's responsibilities which was followed by a staff presentation that provided a historical overview of Statuary Hall and the Robert E. Lee statue. Governor Northam joined the meeting to provide brief remarks. Director Langan provided an overview of the statue removal process. The Commission heard public comment from four individuals, all who spoke in favor of removing the statue. Director Langan provided an overview of the written public comments received via the Commission's email account. Of the 49 emails, all but one spoke in favor of removal. Many comments included suggestions of other Virginians that were worthy of representing the Commonwealth. The Commission members discussed the removal of the Robert E. Lee statue as well as next steps in the removal process.

Recommendation of the Commission: The Commission unanimously approved a motion to recommend to the General Assembly that the Robert E. Lee statue be removed from the Statuary Hall Collection at the United States Capitol.

On July 31, 2020, Governor Northam sent the attached letter to the Architect of the U.S. Capitol requesting approval to immediately remove the Robert E. Lee statue.

This report was unanimously approved by the Commission at its August 7, 2020 meeting.