

STATE OF NEW YORK

3161

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 24, 2025

Introduced by Sens. JACKSON, CLEARE, HINCHEY, LIU, MAY, MYRIE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation

AN ACT to amend the arts and cultural affairs law, in relation to the Amistad Commission

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Section 57.52 of the arts and cultural affairs law, as
2 added by chapter 404 of the laws of 2005, is amended to read as follows:
3 § 57.52. Amistad commission; established. 1. The Amistad commission
4 (commission), so named in honor of the group of enslaved Africans led by
5 Joseph Cinque who, while being transported in eighteen hundred thirty-
6 nine on a vessel named the Amistad, gained their freedom after over-
7 throwing the crew and eventually having their case successfully argued
8 before the United States Supreme Court, is hereby created and estab-
9 lished. The commission shall consist of nineteen members, including the
10 [~~secretary of state~~] commissioner of education or [~~his or her~~] their
11 designee, the [~~commissioner of education~~] secretary of state or [~~his or~~
12 ~~her~~] their designee, and the chancellor of the state university of New
13 York or [~~his or her~~] their designee, serving ex officio, and sixteen
14 public members. Public members shall be appointed as follows: four
15 public members, no more than two of whom shall be of the same political
16 party, shall be appointed by the temporary president of the senate; four
17 public members, no more than two of whom shall be of the same political
18 party, shall be appointed by the speaker of the assembly; and eight
19 public members, no more than four of whom shall be of the same political
20 party, shall be appointed by the governor. The appointed members shall
21 be chosen with due regard to broad ethnic diversity and shall have a
22 demonstrated educational background in the history of the African slave
23 trade and slavery in America or the contributions of African-Americans
24 to our society. The public members shall be residents of the state,

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 chosen with due regard to broad geographic representation and ethnic
2 diversity, who have an interest in the history of the African slave
3 trade and slavery in America and the contributions of African-Americans
4 to our society.

5 1-a. Any business or other matter undertaken or commenced by the
6 department of state or the secretary of state pertaining to or connected
7 with the functions, powers, obligations and duties of the commission
8 established pursuant to subdivision one of this section are hereby
9 transferred and assigned to the commissioner of education or the depart-
10 ment of education and pending on the effective date of this subdivision,
11 may be conducted and completed by such commissioner or such department
12 in the same manner and under the same terms and conditions and with the
13 same effect as if conducted and completed by the department of state or
14 the secretary of state.

15 2. Each public member of the commission shall serve for a term of
16 three years, except that of the initial members so appointed: one member
17 appointed by the temporary president of the senate, one member appointed
18 by the speaker of the assembly, and two members appointed by the gover-
19 nor shall serve for terms of one year; one member appointed by the
20 temporary president of the senate, one member appointed by the speaker
21 of the assembly, and three members appointed by the governor shall serve
22 for terms of two years; and two members appointed by the temporary pres-
23 ident of the senate, two members appointed by the speaker of the assem-
24 bly, and three members appointed by the governor shall serve for terms
25 of three years. Public members shall be eligible for reappointment. They
26 shall serve until their successors are appointed and qualified, and the
27 term of the successor of any incumbent shall be calculated from the
28 expiration of the term of that incumbent. A vacancy occurring other than
29 by expiration of term shall be filled within forty-five days in the same
30 manner as the original appointment but for the unexpired term only. If
31 such vacancy is not filled within forty five days, the vacancy shall be
32 filled within thirty days by the commissioner of education but for the
33 unexpired term only.

34 3. The members of the commission shall serve without compensation but
35 shall be entitled to reimbursement for all necessary expenses incurred
36 in the performance of their duties.

37 4. The [~~secretary of state~~] commissioner of education, or [~~his or her~~]
38 their designee, shall serve as the chair and the [~~commissioner of educa-~~
39 ~~tion~~] secretary of state, or [~~his or her~~] their designee, shall serve as
40 the vice-chair of the commission. The presence of a majority of the
41 authorized membership of the commission shall be required for the
42 conduct of official business.

43 5. The department of education shall provide technical assistance and
44 data to the commission as may be necessary for the commission to carry
45 out its responsibilities pursuant to this article. The commissioner of
46 education or their designee shall be responsible for hiring the staff of
47 the commission and shall serve as the liaison between the commission and
48 the department of education. The commissioner of education may designate
49 employees of the department of education to provide support and services
50 to the commission as are reasonably necessary.

51 § 2. Subdivisions 2 and 3 of section 57.53 of the arts and cultural
52 affairs law, as added by chapter 404 of the laws of 2005, are amended to
53 read as follows:

54 2. to compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing to
55 share their knowledge and experience in classrooms, seminars and work-
56 shops with students and teachers on the subject of the African slave

1 trade, American slavery and the impact of slavery on our society today,
2 and the contributions of African-Americans to our country; [~~and~~]

3 3. to increase awareness and encourage school districts to utilize
4 curricula on African-American history by:

5 (a) establishing and administering a program to publicly recognize
6 schools that do an outstanding job teaching subjects related to the
7 African-American experience through a designation of special status or
8 other award as determined by the commission; and

9 (b) offering grants to individual teachers who demonstrate exemplary
10 practices teaching subjects related to the African-American experience,
11 as determined by the commission, and the commission shall catalog and
12 publicize such practices for use by other teachers; and

13 4. to prepare reports for the governor and the legislature regarding
14 its findings and recommendations on facilitating the inclusion of the
15 African slave trade, American slavery studies, African-American history
16 and special programs in the educational system of the state.

17 § 3. This act shall take effect immediately.