

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- BLACK REGIMENT
MONUMENT COMMISSION

Introduced By: Senators Seveney, DiPalma, and Euer

Date Introduced: March 10, 2022

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 77.2

4 BLACK REGIMENT MONUMENT COMMISSION

5 **42-77.2-1. Legislative findings.**

6 The general assembly finds and declares that:

7 (1) The State of Rhode Island has a well-established record of recognizing, honoring,
8 preserving historic records and sites;

9 (2) The State of Rhode Island was a leading force in the American Revolutionary War,
10 having demonstrated its commitment to an independent form of government from its founding;

11 (3) The Battle of Rhode Island on August 29, 1778, in Portsmouth, served to turn the course
12 of the American Revolutionary War in Rhode Island by forcing the British and Hessian troops to
13 flee;

14 (4) The first Rhode Island Regiment, otherwise known as the "Black Regiment," composed
15 of freed and enslaved Black men and Native American men, displayed uncommon courage on the
16 battlefield in the cause of freedom from tyranny;

17 (5) The Newport County Branch - NAACP led the way in recognizing the importance of
18 the role that The Black Regiment played in the victory in the Battle of Rhode Island;

1 (6) The Newport County Branch - NAACP has conducted a commemoration ceremony at
2 the site of the Battle of Rhode Island in recognition of the feats of the Black Regiment every year
3 since 1968;

4 (7) Through the leadership of the Newport County Branch - NAACP, and in collaboration
5 with state government and federal government, a beautiful monument has been erected at this site,
6 now known as Patriots Park, in Portsmouth; and

7 (8) The Black Regiment Monument has been designated as an historic site, thus requiring
8 ongoing care and oversight.

9 **42-77.2-2. Establishment - Purpose.**

10 There is established the Black Regiment Monument Commission, whose purpose and
11 function shall be to keep the memory of the Black Regiment alive and to assure the proper upkeep
12 and maintenance of the Black Regiment Monument and surrounding park grounds.

13 **42-77.2-3. Membership and annual reports.**

14 (a) The commission shall be comprised of five (5) members:

15 (1) The president of the senate, or designee;

16 (2) The speaker of the house of representatives, or designee;

17 (3) The president of the Portsmouth town council, or designee;

18 (4) The director of the Rhode Island department of environmental management, or
19 designee; and

20 (5) The president of the Newport County Branch - NAACP or designee/member.

21 (b) The commission shall elect a chair, vice-chair, and a secretary on a biennial basis.

22 (c) The commission shall meet at least two (2) times per year, maintain minutes of
23 meetings, comply with open meetings laws and standards, and submit an annual report to the
24 president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives.

25 **42-77.2-4. Duties of commission.**

26 The duties of the commission shall be:

27 (1) The commission shall establish standards and procedures consistent with its purpose
28 and function.

29 (2) The commission shall approve of the use of the monument and grounds at Patriots Park,
30 including all ceremonies, commemorations, lectures, presentations, reenactment, signage,
31 adornments, and the like.

1 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- BLACK REGIMENT
MONUMENT COMMISSION

- 1 This act would establish the Black Regiment Monument Commission to maintain the Black
2 Regiment Monument located in Patriots Park in Portsmouth, and its surrounding grounds while
3 promoting the commemoration of the Black Regiment.
4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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