

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021**

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HOUSE BILL 931

Short Title: Funds for Museum of WNC. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Ager.

For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

May 12, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND
CULTURAL RESOURCES TO COMPLETE A MASTER PLAN FOR A MUSEUM OF
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA HISTORY AND CULTURE.

Whereas, since the late 1970s numerous efforts led by dedicated citizens and friends of history have attempted to raise support for and establish a Museum of Western North Carolina History and Culture; and

Whereas, unlike other areas of our State, Western North Carolina lacks a comprehensive regional State-operated museum that preserves and interprets Southern Appalachian "mountain" history and culture and that focuses on serving counties located in the "Far West" to the "Central Blue Ridge" to the "High Country" to the "Foothills"; and

Whereas, of the seven museums currently managed by the Division of State History Museums, only one, the Mountain Gateway Museum and Heritage Center, is in Western North Carolina and is tasked with preserving and interpreting the history and culture of a 38-county service area with limited staff, exhibition, and collection storage space; and

Whereas, the six other museums administered by the Division of State History Museums, including the flagship North Carolina Museum of History, are in various regions of Eastern and Coastal North Carolina; and

Whereas, because of this deficiency, citizens of Western North Carolina and visitors have limited options to learn about the uniqueness of the region's history, culture, music, and traditions, and its many contributions to our State and national legacies; and

Whereas, the museum will follow the mission of the Division of State History Museums to serve as a repository of the region's collective memory by collecting artifacts and other materials relating to the history and heritage of Western North Carolina to assist people in understanding how the past influences the present; and

Whereas, the museum will interpret Western North Carolina history through exhibitions, educational programs, conferences, and similar activities, and serve as a cultural and community resource center promoting understanding among the diverse people who inhabit the region; and

Whereas, the museum will function as a much-needed educational resource for students and teachers from regional K-12 schools and colleges and universities, giving educators new opportunities in virtual and in-person learning and serve as a destination for field trips; and

Whereas, the museum will include a visitor/tourist orientation center and digital presence allowing it to engage with communities around Western North Carolina by serving as



1 a connector to cultural and educational tourism experiences at historic and cultural sites, local
2 history museums, and music, craft, and nature trails throughout the region; and

3 Whereas, the museum will also offer additional entertainment opportunities for
4 collaboration with local musicians, dancers, craftspeople, and other performers as a venue where
5 visitors can explore the rich heritage of Western North Carolina, from its myths and legends,
6 natural resources and natural beauty, sacred singing, and bluegrass music; and

7 Whereas, the museum will allow the Division of State History Museums to expand
8 the Exhibit Outreach Program currently provided by the Mountain Gateway Museum and
9 Heritage Center to local historic and cultural sites, museums, and other historical organizations
10 throughout the region; and

11 Whereas, the museum will allow for expanded opportunities for collaboration with
12 local historic and cultural sites, museums, and other historical organizations in the preservation
13 of artifacts, production of temporary and travel exhibitions, staff development, educational
14 programming, and similar activities that are not available to the same degree as other parts of the
15 State where State-operated museums are more plentiful; and

16 Whereas, the current museum steering committee has determined the next step for the
17 new museum is the development of a Master Plan that includes site evaluation and selection,
18 environmental assessment, feasibility and economic impact study, review of institutional assets
19 and collections, thematic treatments, and preliminary exhibition layout, staffing and projected
20 operating budget needs, and any other requirements, in keeping with State and local regulations;
21 and

22 Whereas, funding is needed to complete the Master Plan for the new museum; Now,
23 therefore,

24 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

25 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
26 Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of State History Museums, the sum of two million nine
27 hundred thousand dollars (\$2,900,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2021-2022 fiscal year to
28 complete a Master Plan focusing on the future construction of a Museum of Western North
29 Carolina History and Culture. The funds appropriated in this section shall not revert until June
30 30, 2023.

31 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2021.