



Booker T. Washington Joint Commemorative Commission

August 17, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

General Assembly Building, Senate Room A, Room 305

<https://studies.viriniageneralassembly.gov/studies/611>

The Booker T. Washington Joint Commemorative Commission (the Commission) met in Richmond for its first meeting as a joint commission.¹ The meeting began with the election of Senator Mamie E. Locke as chair and Delegate C.E. (Cliff) Hayes, Jr., as vice-chair, followed by introductions, presentations, and discussion. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [Commission's meetings webpage](#).

Overview of Commission's Previous Work

Senator Mamie E. Locke, Chair of the Commission

Senator Locke gave an overview of the Commission's work to date. The Commission was initially created in 2021 by Senate Resolution 95 (Suetterlein) as a Senate commission, tasked with studying and recommending to the Senate of Virginia an appropriate statue in the Old Senate Chamber to commemorate the life, achievements, and legacy of Booker T. Washington. The Senate commission met six times, beginning in 2021, to discuss Booker T. Washington's legacy, recommend artists, set fundraising goals, and discuss timelines. The Senate commission also visited Hampton University's Booker T. Washing statue.

In 2026, Senator Locke and Senator David R. Suetterlein patroned Senate Joint Resolution 111, reconstituting the Senate commission as a joint commemorative commission and broadening its purpose. The Commission is now tasked with studying and recommending to the General Assembly an appropriate statue and location on Capitol Square to commemorate the life, achievements, and legacy of Booker T. Washington.

Discussion on Artist Selection Process

The Honorable Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Senate of Virginia

Ms. Schaar described progress on a request for proposal (RFP) to begin the search for an artist to design the statue. Based on previous discussions of the Senate commission, the RFP will specify that the Commission is seeking an artist to create a bronze, life-size statue of Booker T. Washington that reflects his contributions in Virginia. The statue should depict Mr. Washington at approximately the age when he took leadership of Tuskegee Institute.

An RFP is currently in progress that will be finalized and sent out to any artists identified by the Commission, as well as to various art schools and studios.

¹ **Members Present:** Senator Mamie E. Locke, chair, Delegate C.E. (Cliff) Hayes, vice chair, Senator Lashrecse D. Aird, Senator David R. Suetterlein, Senator Scott A. Surovell, Delegate Betsy B. Carr, Delegate Charniele L. Herring (virtual), Delegate Ellen H. McLaughlin, Paul Nardo, Susan Schaar

Members Absent: Senator William M. Stanley, Jr., Speaker Don Scott, Delegate Jeion A. Ward, Delegate R. Lee Ware

Discussion on Statue Location

Members discussed locations in Capitol Square that would be available and appropriate for a statue of Booker T. Washington, which included several locations along the north side of the Capitol where statues have been or will be removed. The Commission agreed to recommend the site of the former Harry F. Byrd statue, near the George Washington Equestrian Monument, as the site of the new statue.

Fundraising

The Commission has begun fundraising through the Virginia Capitol Foundation and has received individual donations and a \$50,000 pledge from Dominion. The Commission will increase its fundraising activities after selecting a design for the statue, with an initial goal of between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

For more information, see the [*Commission's website*](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

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