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S.B. 261
133rd General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Sens. Yuko and Rulli

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SUMMARY

- Establishes the Commission on Eastern European Affairs.
- Establishes the Office of Eastern European Affairs to serve the Commission.
- Makes an appropriation.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Commission on Eastern European Affairs

Duties

The bill creates the Commission on Eastern European Affairs, and requires the Commission to do all of the following:

1. Gather and disseminate information and conduct hearings, conferences, investigations, and special studies on issues and programs concerning Eastern European people;
2. Secure appropriate recognition of accomplishments and contributions of Eastern European people to Ohio;
3. Promote public awareness of the issues of Eastern European people by conducting a public education program;
4. Develop, coordinate, and assist other public and private organizations that serve Eastern European people, including conducting training programs for community leadership and service project staff;
5. Advise the Governor, General Assembly, and state departments and agencies of the nature, magnitude, and priorities of the issues of Eastern European people;
6. Advise the Governor, General Assembly, and state departments and agencies on the special needs of Eastern European people regarding education, employment, energy,

health, housing, welfare, and recreation, and develop and implement policies and programs to address those needs;

7. Propose new programs concerning Eastern European people to public and private agencies and evaluate any agency's existing program;
8. Review and approve grants from federal, state, or private funds that are administered or subcontracted by the Office of Eastern European Affairs created in the bill;
9. Review and approve the Office's annual report;
10. Coordinate and provide information on available state services to meet the needs of Eastern European people.¹

Under the bill, "Eastern European people" means people who possess either of the following characteristics:

1. Use an eastern European language as the person's primary language;
2. Identify as or are regarded in the community as being of Albanian, Belarusian, Bosnian and Herzegovinian, Bulgarian, Carpatho-Rusyn, Croatian, Czech, east European Jewish, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Kashubian, Kosovar, Latvian, Lithuanian, Lusatian Sorbian, Macedonian, Moldovans, Montenegrins, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Transylvanian Saxon, Ukrainian, or any other eastern European origin.²

Membership

The Commission consists of 15 members – 11 are voting and four are nonvoting. The Governor must appoint the voting members with the advice and consent of the Senate; the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate each recommend two appointees to the Governor and the minority leaders of the House and Senate each recommend one appointee to the Governor. The four nonvoting members are General Assembly members; two are appointed by the Speaker (one from the majority party and one from the minority party) and two are appointed by the President (one from the majority party and one from the minority party).³

Qualifications

The voting members of the Commission must be of Eastern European origin and United States citizens or lawful permanent residents. The members must be representative of various geographical regions of Eastern European people and proportionally representative of the Eastern European composition of Ohio.⁴

¹ R.C. 107.22(A) and 107.23(A).

² R.C. 107.23(B).

³ R.C. 107.22(A).

⁴ R.C. 107.22(A)(4).

Terms

Each voting member serves a three-year term, except initially the term lengths vary to create a staggering of the terms, as determined by the Governor – three members' terms end one year after their appointment, four end October two years after their appointment, and four end three years after their appointment. Except for initial appointees, members serve from the date of appointment until the end of the three-year term for which the member was appointed. If a member's term ends but the member's successor has not begun serving on the Commission, the member must continue with the Commission for up to 30 days or until the successor begins serving. General Assembly members serving on the Commission serve until the ending date of the members' terms as members of the General Assembly. Finally, the Governor, Speaker, and President must fill any vacancy of a member they originally appointed; the member appointed to fill the vacancy serves only for the duration of the original member's term.⁵

Organization

The Commission must meet at least six times each calendar year and prescribe rules to govern the Commission. During the first meeting, the Commission must elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and other officers from its voting members. No action can be taken by the Commission without the affirmative vote of six of the voting members, which constitute a quorum.⁶

Compensation

The voting members of the Commission receive compensation for actual and necessary expenses incurred and for each day that the member is engaged in Commission duties.⁷ The bill limits compensation to one day per month.⁸

Office of Eastern European Affairs

The bill also creates the Office of Eastern European Affairs to serve the Commission. The Commission must appoint a Director for the Office, who serves at the pleasure of the Commission. The Director must appoint employees as necessary to carry out the Office's duties, with the Commission's approval. Employees serve at the pleasure of the Director.⁹

Duties

Under the bill, the Office must do all of the following:

⁵ R.C. 107.22(A)(1) and (B).

⁶ R.C. 107.22(C) and (D).

⁷ Under R.C. 124.15, not in the bill; the Director of Administrative Services establishes the rate and method of payment for the Commission members' compensation.

⁸ R.C. 107.22(E).

⁹ R.C. 107.23(A) and 107.24(A) and (B).

1. Provide information and advise the Commission on proposed solutions to problems of Eastern European people;
2. Serve as a clearinghouse to review and comment on all proposals to meet the needs of Eastern European people submitted to the Office by public and private agencies;
3. Apply for and accept grants and gifts from government and private sources to be administered by the Office or subcontracted to local agencies, as long as the local agencies use the grants and gifts for the public purpose intended;
4. Monitor and evaluate all programs subcontracted to local agencies by the Commission and ensure that any grants and gifts from the government are being used for the public purpose intended;
5. Endeavor to ensure that Eastern European people have access to decision-making bodies in all state and local government departments and agencies;
6. Submit an annual written report to the Commission of the Office's activities, accomplishments, and recommendations;
7. As needed, establish an advisory committee for special subjects composed of persons representing community organizations, charitable institutions, public officials, and other persons determined by the Office, to facilitate and maximize community participation in the Commission's operation;
8. Establish relationships with local governments, state governments, and private businesses that promote and ensure equal opportunity for Eastern European people in government, education, and employment.¹⁰

Appropriation

The bill appropriates \$440,944 in each of FY 2020 and FY 2021 for the Commission's operating expenses.¹¹

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	01-21-20

S0261-I-133/ts

¹⁰ R.C. 107.24(C).

¹¹ Section 2.