

# Washington State Flag Redesign Commission

## Introduction

The Washington State flag often faces criticism for its poor design and lack of relevance to the state's identity. The flag features a detailed portrait of George Washington, making it overly complex and difficult to reproduce — a violation of key flag design principles, which prioritize simplicity. Additionally, while George Washington is an important national figure, he has limited historical connection to Washington State itself. This makes his image less meaningful as a symbol for the state.

Aesthetically, the flag fails in other ways as well. It uses too many colors, and its design is essentially a seal on a green background with text — an approach that is widely regarded as outdated and uninspired in flag design. As one of 28 U.S. state flags that follow this "seal-on-a-solid-color" format, it lacks distinctiveness and fails to capture the unique character of Washington State.

To address these concerns, we propose establishing the **Washington State Flag Redesign Commission**. The commission will oversee the process of creating a new state flag that better reflects the diversity and values of all Washingtonians. The current flag, though historically significant, does not resonate with the state's evolving identity. The inspiration for this initiative comes from Minnesota's successful State Emblems Redesign Commission. Like Minnesota, Washington aims to create a flag that symbolizes unity and represents the unique character of the state.

## Commission Formation

The Washington State Flag Redesign Commission will be established through state legislation, appointing the Secretary of State as the head of the Commission. This leadership choice ensures that the process is managed by a respected, nonpartisan office with a deep understanding of Washington's history and civic values. The Secretary of State is also the custodian of the state seal and serves the statutory role as the promoter of the state flag. The Commission will include a diverse group of members, including historians, designers, cultural leaders, and representatives from different regions of the state. This diversity ensures that the Commission's work will be inclusive and reflective of Washington's broad population.

This commission is modeled after a popular and successful Minnesota effort to redesign their flag in 2023.

## Commission Responsibilities

Once formed, the Commission will organize its initial meetings to set goals, timelines, and a comprehensive work plan. A key early task will be to develop an extensive design brief that outlines the vision, criteria, and values that the new flag should embody. This brief will guide designers in creating concepts that capture the essence of Washington. Following this, the Commission will turn its focus to public engagement, launching a statewide design contest and creating multiple avenues for public input and commentary. By following Minnesota's example, the Commission will ensure that the process is transparent and participatory.

## **Public Engagement**

Public engagement will be a cornerstone of the Washington State Flag Redesign process. Learning from Minnesota's experience, where over 2,100 design concepts were submitted, the Washington Commission will actively encourage citizens from all walks of life to contribute their ideas. This will include outreach to schools, community organizations, and tribal nations to ensure broad participation. In addition to the design contest, the Commission will host public forums, virtual discussions, and online surveys to gather feedback. This process will not only generate a wealth of design ideas but also foster a sense of ownership and pride among Washingtonians.

## **Selection Process**

The selection process will be rigorous and inclusive, ensuring that the final designs reflect the values and aspirations of all Washingtonians. The Commission will review the submitted designs with an eye for creativity, historical relevance, and the ability to represent the state's diverse population and landscapes. A shortlist of finalists will be chosen based on these criteria. These finalists will be publicly displayed, allowing for further public commentary and feedback. This approach, modeled after Minnesota's process, ensures that the final flag is not only aesthetically pleasing but also deeply meaningful to the people of Washington.

## **Finalization and Public Vote**

Once the Commission chooses a final design proposal, it would be put to a public vote during a general election. A public vote was also used when Maine chose to redesign their flag in 2024.

Following Maine's example, this vote would technically be a referendum, allowing Washingtonians to decide whether to adopt the new design proposal or stay with the current flag.

This democratic process will give Washingtonians the final say in choosing the new state flag. The public vote is a crucial step, as it ensures that the chosen flag has broad support and represents the collective will of the people.

## **Conclusion**

The creation of a new state flag is more than just a design project; it is an opportunity to unite

the people of Washington around a shared symbol of pride and identity. The Washington State Flag Redesign Commission will work diligently to ensure that the process is inclusive, transparent, and reflective of the state's values. By drawing on the lessons learned from Minnesota's State Emblems Redesign Commission, Washington is poised to create a new flag that honors its past while looking boldly toward the future. The contributions of designers and the public will be vital in creating a flag that truly represents all Washingtonians.