

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

**H.B. 931**  
**May 11, 2021**  
**HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK**

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**HOUSE BILL DRH30327-LGa-69**

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

Sponsors: Representative Ager.

Referred to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 Whereas, the museum will include a visitor/tourist orientation center and digital  
34 presence allowing it to engage with communities around Western North Carolina by serving as  
35 a connector to cultural and educational tourism experiences at historic and cultural sites, local  
36 history museums, and music, craft, and nature trails throughout the region; and



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

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

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

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

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

22 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

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