Legislation to Place Statue of Billy Frank, Jr. in U.S. Capitol

What does this bill do?

Every state in the U.S. sends two statues to represent their state in the National Statuary Hall in Washington D.C. These statutes celebrate prominent and influential citizens who shaped the state’s history.

Few have made as profound of an impact while overcoming adversity like Nisqually tribal member Billy Frank Jr. This bill would recognize Billy’s important contributions by selecting him to be one of Washington state’s statutes in the National Statuary Hall.

In the 1960’s and 70’s, salmon numbers were in steep decline after decades of unregulated commercial overfishing, habitat destruction, and dam construction. Sadly, Indians were blamed by many for the salmon's decline. Countless native people were harassed, attacked, and jailed for exercising their treaty-reserved fishing rights. Billy was beaten and jailed over fifty times.

Throughout this time, Billy advocated not just for the treaty right to harvest salmon, but also the tribal right to co-manage salmon and the habitat and ecosystems they depend on. His vision was codified in the 1974 Boldt Decision, which established the 20 treaty Indian tribes in western Washington as co-managers of the salmon resource with the State of Washington and re-affirmed tribal rights to half of the harvestable salmon returning to western Washington. Today, salmon and all of us are in a much better place than they would have been were it not for Billy’s courage, foresight and commitment.

To learn more about the life and legacy of Billy Frank Jr., visit: http://billyfrankjr.org/

Why a Statue for Billy Frank Jr.?

Billy’s story is one that highlights the contributions of Native people who have lived here and stewarded the natural resources since time immemorial. Billy dedicated his life to the need to honor and uphold treaty rights, the importance of salmon recovery and habitat restoration, and the need for people to work together and co-manage resources.
Honoring Billy is also important as our state and nation continues to acknowledge and apologize for decades of violence and oppression the federal and state governments perpetuated against Indian people and sovereign tribal nations. Billy would be the eighth indigenous person to be honored in the National Statuary Hall.

**How much will this cost Washington taxpayers?**

While the state legislature needs to authorize sending a statue of Billy to Washington, D.C., it is not required to pay for it. Many other statues sent to Statuary Hall were paid for entirely by private donations. This bill follows the same strategy and will not use taxpayer dollars to fund the creation or transportation of this statue.

**Does this mean we will have to replace of one of our current statutes? Which one would we replace and what would happen to it?**

By sending a statue of Billy Frank Jr. to statuary Hall, Washington will have to bring one of our current statues home. The two statues currently representing Washington in Statuary Hall are of Marcus Whitman since 1953 and Mother Joseph since 1980. Unlike Billy, neither were born in Washington state. Under this bill, Billy would replace Marcus Whitman.

While Marcus Whitman had an impact on Washington’s history, it is important for us to recognize the contributions of Native Americans and people of color, who are often ignored and forgotten. Like many European colonizers who came to the Northwest, he has a checkered history and relationship with Indian people.

Marcus Whitman’s statue was chosen to be removed because it has been there the longest of the two current statues. It is also important to celebrate contemporary stories of people who shaped our state and country. Few statues in Statuary Hall are of people who were alive in the last few decades. This bill directs the state to find an appropriate and honorable place for the Whitman statue upon its return to Washington State. The bill also sets up a process to continually review and update the statues representing Washington State in Statuary Hall. This would allow Washington to continue to honor others and continue to tell new stories over the coming decades.

**For more information regarding the Billy Frank, Jr. statue legislation contact:** The Office of Rep. Debra Lekanoff: Debra.Lekanoff@leg.wa.gov (360) 419-5266

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