

Preliminary Performance Review

**Holocaust Education
Commission**

**The West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission
Offers a Unique and Valuable Service
to the Citizens of West Virginia**



**December 2002
PE02-31-263**

JOINT COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

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John Sylvia
Director

December 15, 2002

The Honorable Edwin J. Bowman
State Senate
129 West Circle Drive
Weirton, West Virginia 26062

The Honorable Vicki V. Douglas
House of Delegates
Building 1, Room E-213
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0470

Dear Chairs:

Pursuant to the West Virginia Sunset Law, we are transmitting a *Preliminary Performance Review of the Holocaust Education Commission*, which will be presented to the Joint Committee on Government Operations on Sunday, December 15, 2002. The issue covered herein is "The West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission Offers a Unique and Valuable Service to the Citizens of West Virginia."

We transmitted a draft copy of the report to the Holocaust Education Commission on November 22, 2002. The Commission opted not to have an Exit Conference. We received the agency response on November 29, 2002.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Sylvia".

John Sylvia

JS/wsc

Joint Committee on Government and Finance

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Executive Summary

Issue 1: The West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission Offers a Unique and Valuable Service to the Citizens of West Virginia

The West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission (HEC) was created under executive order No. 20-98 on April 16, 1998. On July 13, 2001 the HEC was codified, thereby establishing it as a permanent state agency. The Commission is composed of eleven members with various education, professional, and historical backgrounds. **The Legislative Auditor has found that the HEC provides a valuable service to the citizens of West Virginia.** Many other states possess similar Commissions. Though the West Virginia Commission is unfunded by the state, its accomplishments are noteworthy. Through fund drives and private donations, the HEC has been able to generate an estimated \$40,000 annually, with which the HEC has developed an acclaimed curriculum, offered educational exhibits, trained teachers, organized contests and ceremonies, and created a library. As outlined in West Virginia Code §5-28, the Commission has a number of statutory mandates. **The Legislative Auditor has found the Commission to be in complete compliance with statute.** However, despite the Commission's accomplishments to date, the Executive Director maintains that it is difficult to develop a long range program when it does not know how much funding it will have or where the funds will come from.

Recommendation

It is the recommendation of the Legislative Auditor that the West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission be continued.

Review Objective, Scope and Methodology

This Preliminary Performance Review of the West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission is required and authorized by the West Virginia Sunset Law, Chapter 4, Article 10 of the West Virginia *Code*, as amended. The agency is designed to serve as a central resource for schools, churches, and communities studying the Holocaust. The agency intends to survey, design, encourage, and promote implementation of holocaust education and awareness programs in West Virginia, and to be responsible for organizing and promoting the memorialization of the Holocaust on a regular basis throughout the state.

Objective

It is the objective of this audit to evaluate the progress of the agency since its inception, the effectiveness of its actions, and the need for its services. It is also the intent of the Legislative Auditor to determine whether the agency is able to operate effectively despite a lack of state funding.

Scope

The scope of this performance evaluation covers the period from the agency's codification on July 13, 2001 to the present, with mention of the agency's creation under executive order No. 20-98 on April 16, 1998.

Methodology

Information compiled in this report has been acquired through interviews, conversations, and correspondence with the Executive Director of the Holocaust Education Commission. Documents obtained from the agency include: 1) letters from the Executive Director to the Legislative Auditor; 2) a report of the WVHEC, as presented to the Governor and the Legislature by the Director; 3) educational materials created by the Commission; and 4) annual budget information.

Every aspect of this evaluation complied with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

The West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission Offers a Unique and Valuable Service to the Citizens of West Virginia

The Holocaust Education Commission (HEC) is intended to serve as a central resource for schools, churches, and communities studying the Holocaust. The Commission believes that educating people as to the atrocities of the Holocaust is the proper way to guard against the repetition of such an event. The Commission aims to encourage people to rededicate themselves to the principles of human rights and equal protection under the laws of a democratic society. As outlined in West Virginia Code §5-28-1, the Commission *will survey, design, encourage, and promote implementation of holocaust education and awareness programs in West Virginia and will be responsible for organizing and promoting the memorialization of the Holocaust on a regular basis throughout the state.* **The Legislative Auditor has found that the HEC provides a valuable service to the citizens of West Virginia.**

The Efforts of the Commission Have Been Extensive and Demonstrate Compliance with Statute

West Virginia Code §5-28-3(1) requires that the HEC provide assistance and advice to educators with respect to the implementation of Holocaust education and awareness programs.

- i The Commission has designed a textbook entitled, *The Holocaust in Perspective*, and accompanying teacher material for West Virginia students of middle school or junior high age. This information has been provided to school superintendents and various educators. The textbook has been endorsed by Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, Holocaust Authority and author of *Night*. Wiesel says:

Dr. Levy has taken what others would deem a formidable task and done a superb job creating a thorough and thoughtful curriculum for students in the intermediate grades. It is perceptive and sophisticated without being beyond their reach.

Fund raising for the printing and distribution of the material, however, has fallen short by \$20,000. As a result of such a shortfall, the curriculum has been distributed to only a handful of schools. As of 2001, the curriculum was being used in schools in at least 5 counties and

several others may have introduced it in the fall of 2002.

- ï The Commission has created a Holocaust library with holdings that are growing, though slowly, because of insufficient funds. The library is open for research and advice. Individuals and students alike have taken advantage of this resource.
- ï The HEC has distributed yearly information as received from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) regarding the designation of Days of Remembrance for Holocaust Victims throughout West Virginia.

West Virginia *Code* ß5-28-3(2) requires that the HEC meet with appropriate education officials and other interested public and private organizations for the purpose of providing information and planning, coordinating, or modifying courses of study or programs dealing with the Holocaust.

- ï The Commission meets regularly with State Board of Education officials, as well as other educators in an attempt to offer Holocaust information, develop a standardized curriculum, and modify courses of study. The last such meeting was on April 18, 2002, at which the Executive Director of the Commission presented the text, *Holocaust in Perspective*, to the Board.

West Virginia *Code* ß5-28-3(3) requires the HEC to compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing to share their verifiable knowledge and experiences relevant to the Holocaust.

- ï The HEC has researched, used, and documented local volunteers, whenever needed or appropriate for programs or exhibits. The Commission recognizes that in West Virginia the pool of qualified speakers, Holocaust survivors, or concentration camp liberators, is at best, very limited. Therefore, the Commission has deemed it wise to seek support from neighboring states and regions. The Chairperson, in her capacity as a Holocaust survivor affiliated with several Holocaust organizations, was fortunate to obtain such organizations' cooperation in gaining access to their rosters of volunteer speakers. The HEC has successfully used these volunteers in a variety of programs including school visitations, teacher workshops, and commemorative programs for the general public.

West Virginia *Code* ß5-28-3(4) requires the HEC to coordinate events memorializing the Holocaust and to seek volunteers to participate in

commemorative events that will enhance public awareness of the significance of the Holocaust.

- i The HEC was able to procure the "Vivian Fry - An American Hero" exhibit from the USHMM in Washington D.C., and organize its touring and viewing in several West Virginia cities via the State Library Organization and private showings. Other such exhibits are planned for the future.
- ii The HEC, in partnership with the Clarksburg Public Library, has embarked on a project to honor West Virginia veterans of WWII in order to thank them for liberating camps and for their sacrifices in the name of freedom and justice. Their wartime experiences will be professionally recorded on CD-Rom; one copy of which is intended for the Commission's archives, and one of which will remain in the Clarksburg Public Library. A third copy will be placed with the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.

West Virginia *Code* B5-28-3(5) requires that the HEC prepare annual reports for the Governor and the Legislature regarding its findings and recommendations to facilitate the inclusion of Holocaust studies and special programs memorializing the Holocaust in educational systems in this state. **The HEC is in complete compliance with this provision. The last such report was presented to the Governor and the Legislature on July 30, 2002.**

The Commission Has Appointed an Education Council Consisting of West Virginia Volunteer Teachers

The HEC has appointed an Education Council made up of ten members and two co-directors from various counties representing the geographic diversity of the state. The Council meets regularly and has instituted various programs and initiatives pertaining to Holocaust education.

- i The Council has organized annual writing and art contests with themes such as, "Children in the Holocaust" and "Resistance in the Holocaust". Such contests have been promoted via letters to principals and faculty senate chairs throughout West Virginia schools. The 2001 contest attracted over 400 entries of which 24 winners were selected in junior and senior divisions of the categories of visual arts, short stories, prose and poetry. A ceremony was then held where winners received various prizes as well as a printed booklet containing all of the winning entries.

-
- i Members of the Council offered assistance to the executive director of the Commission in developing the text, *Holocaust in Perspective*.
 - i Council members have participated in lectures and workshops offered by the Commission in various locales throughout the state.

The Commission Has Plans for Future Action

The HEC maintains that it has worked hard to fulfill its mandated obligations, yet its task is far from complete. The Commission recognizes that it must continue to educate and inform citizens to stay on par with similar commissions in neighboring states. To that effect, the Commission plans to:

- i Institute criteria and workshops designed to work towards the credentialing of educators in the field of Holocaust education;
- i Work towards the incorporation of the textbook, *Holocaust in Perspective*, and other educational tools as standardized curriculum in the State's schools;
- i Ascertain the level of Holocaust education and awareness in schools, by conducting surveys and polling principals of middle and high schools throughout the state. Results will be tabulated to find the areas of greatest need for future programming efforts;
- i Invite representatives from the public and private sectors of higher education to attend a retreat scheduled for November 20 and 21, 2002. The aim is to gain input that will allow the Commission to forge ahead with plans for the coming year; and
- i Expand teacher workshops in different locations throughout the state, funds permitting, from one to three concurrent sessions during the summer of 2003, so as to reach a maximum number of eligible teachers.

The Commission Does Not Receive State Funding

While in existence under executive order No. 20-98 from April 16, 1998 to July of 2001 the Commission received \$5,000 in annual state funding. Upon the Commission's codification in July of 2001 that funding was eliminated. As an unfunded agency, the HEC must hold repeated fund drives in order to obtain private donations. Such private donations over the past three years have generated anywhere from \$3,445 to \$7,752 annually. Other funding has been

generated through activities such as book sales, workshops, fairs, festivals, and exhibits. The Commission has also accepted grants from public and private entities such as the West Virginia Department of Education and the Federated Jewish Charities of Huntington. In January of 2002, the Department of Education and the Arts presented the Commission with a one-time \$25,000 grant in accompaniment with the Distinguished West Virginian Award presented to the Executive Director. The extensive efforts of the Commission and the charitable donations of other organizations and individuals have generated an estimated \$40,000 in liquid assets annually.

The Executive Director of the Commission maintains that it is impossible for the HEC to design a long-range program or to even plan a year in advance because it never knows how much money it will have or where the money will come from.

A similar Commission in New Jersey receives nearly \$150,000 in state funding annually, and a recently created Holocaust Education Commission in Virginia receives nearly \$81,000 in annual state funding.

Conclusion

The Commission has worked hard to fulfil its mandated obligations. The Legislative Auditor has found the HEC to be in complete compliance with statute. Further efforts of the Commission demonstrate firm beliefs in the importance of Holocaust education in guarding against the repetition of such an atrocity. Given that the Holocaust occurred during the 1930ís and 1940ís, the use of actual survivors as resources is limited by time. If the agency were terminated, such valuable resources would be forfeited.

The fund raising efforts of the Commission have been extensive and well-organized, and have allowed the Commission to make significant progress towards the accomplishment of its ultimate goals. Though the Commission should be commended on its accomplishments despite the lack of guaranteed funding, it maintains that such extensive fund raising efforts are time-consuming and distracting from the HECís ultimate purpose. Furthermore, the funds raised by the Commission fall far short of the foreseen budget that would allow the Commission to achieve its full potential and ultimate goals.

Recommendation

It is the recommendation of the Legislative Auditor that the Holocaust Education Commission be continued.

Appendix A: Transmittal Letter to Agency

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE *Performance Evaluation and Research Division*

Building 1, Room W-314
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0610
(304) 347-4890
(304) 347-4939 FAX



John Sylvia
Director

November 22, 2002

Dr. Edith Rechter Levy
Holocaust Education Commission
P.O. Box 1125
Morgantown, WV 26507-1125

Dear Dr. Levy:

This is to transmit a draft copy of the Preliminary Performance Review of the Holocaust Education Commission. This report is scheduled to be presented at the Sunday, December 15, 2002 interim meeting of the Joint Committee on Government Operations. It is expected that a representative from your agency be present at the meeting to orally respond to the report and answer any questions the committee may have. If you would like to schedule an exit conference to discuss any concerns you may have with the report between now and December 4, 2002, please notify us. We need your written response by noon on December 4, 2002 in order for it to be included in the final report.

We request that your personnel treat the draft report as confidential and that it not be disclosed to anyone not affiliated with your agency. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John Sylvia in cursive script.
John Sylvia

Joint Committee on Government and Finance

Appendix B: Agency Response



West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission

P.O. Box 1125 Morgantown, WV 26507 Phone: (304) 291-3732 Fax: (304) 292-0095

November 29, 2002

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE
Performance Evaluation and Research Division
Joint Committee on Government and Finance
Building 1, Room W-314
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Charleston, WV 25305-0610

Attention: Mr. John Sylvia.

Dear Mr. Sylvia:

This is to acknowledge your report of November 22, 2002

After reviewing its content, we find it a thorough and accurate description of the activities of the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education and would like to thank you for your efforts.

I believe however that the first paragraph on the last page regarding "sources of income," although accurate in principle, does not present the whole picture and perhaps needs some further clarification.

1. There exist several Federated Jewish Charities in West Virginia. We have received a minimal stipend of \$500.00 from the Huntington Federated Jewish Charities only.
2. While the amount raised via private donations seems accurate, the larger sums quoted between April 2000 and March 2002 may give an erroneous image of the commission's regular working capital.

In the year 2000, we received a large grant of close to \$20,000 from the WV Humanities Council for a specific project, i.e. the Summer 2000 two-week intensive summer teacher Institute, during which we worked with 27 teachers from 20 WV counties. This was a *one-time grant* for this specific institute.

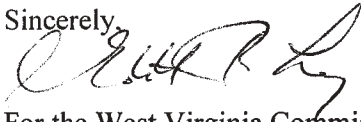
Last year, we again received a *one-time only* grant of \$15,000 from an out of state donor, who requested to remain anonymous. We also received a \$25,000 stipend from the Department of Arts and Education. Thus far, this amount has not been renewed.

Ergo, although the figures are essentially correct, they do not indicate nor project similar resources for the year 2003. It is therefore imperative that the commission receive a line-item budget to allow it to continue its ever growing state-wide educational activities. The enclosed budget allocation sheet from neighboring states, compiled in 1998, although somewhat dated, presents a reference with regard to needs.

Lastly and in view of the above explanation as to potential income, may we respectfully request that, although we are grateful for your positive **Recommendation 1**, might it be possible to add a **Recommendation 2**, i.e. that the commission “be funded?”

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



For the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education,
Edith Rechter Levy, Ed. D.,
Chair and Executive Director,
WVHEC

COMPARATIVE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS FROM OTHER
LEGISLATED COMMISSION IN THE EASTERN REGION.

Florida:		\$300,000.00
New Jersey:	(primarily for education)	\$200,000.00
Georgia:		\$180,000.00 \$310,000.00
Tennessee:	(dates available for the 1996-2000 period)	\$118,000.00
North Carolina:		\$ 81,000.00

