



Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission

Tribute to Yvonne Miller Work Group

September 4, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov

The Tribute to Yvonne Miller Work Group (the Work Group) of the Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) held its first meeting virtually with Senator Mamie E. Locke, chair, presiding.¹ The meeting began with introductions and opening remarks followed by discussion. Video of the meeting is archived on the [House of Delegates Video Streaming](#) webpage.

Overview of the Work Group's Purpose

Lily Jones, the Division of Legislative Services' staff to the Commission, reviewed the history and purpose behind the Work Group's creation. The Commission created the Work Group after it received a \$50,000 budget appropriation for fiscal year 2021 to begin the process of planning a memorial tribute to Senator Yvonne Miller, to be placed in the Capitol or in Capitol Square. The Commission discussed possibilities for a memorial tribute in the form of a statue or portrait and tasked the Work Group with developing plans and recommendations for the tribute's form.

Louise Lockett Gordon discussed the intention behind the initial request for a tribute to Senator Miller, made to the Commission's chair at the time, Senator Jennifer L. McClellan. Ms. Gordon is a member of Senator Miller's sorority, Theta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., which takes part annually in Theta Day at the Capitol, a tradition initiated by Senator Miller. The sorority annually brings youth to the Capitol to familiarize them with state government; however, these visits highlight a lack of representation of Black women in the Capitol's statues and portraits. A tribute to Senator Miller in the Capitol would address this lack of representation as well as honor the first Black woman elected to the House of Delegates and first Black woman elected to the Senate of Virginia.

Discussion: Initial Work Plan and Recommendations to the Full Commission

Members of the Work Group discussed the form that a tribute to Senator Miller might take. The Work Group did not finalize a recommendation for the tribute's form, but agreed that a portrait might convey a sense of warmth more effectively than would a statue. Members discussed the possibility of creating a life-size portrait, combined with a museum-like display to provide

¹ **Members Present:** Senator Mamie E. Locke (chair), Delegate Alex Q. Askew, Senator Adam P. Ebbin, Kirk T. Schroder, J.D., Ph.D., Louise Lockett Gordon, Dr. Karen Turner Ward

Members Absent: Delegate Betsy B. Carr

context. Kirk T. Schroder, J.D., Ph.D., offered to contact Riggs Ward Design to draft a concept that could guide the Work Group in its next steps. Members also discussed potential costs of the project and whether cost might influence the decision on whether to commission a portrait or a statue. Senator Locke told the Work Group that she has spoken with a potential donor who will be willing to help fund the project in whatever form it takes.

Senator Locke directed staff to determine available locations in the Capitol for the tribute prior to the Work Group's next meeting at which the Work Group will consider locations and preliminary concepts.

Next Meeting

The Work Group agreed to hold its next meeting in-person at the General Assembly Building at 9:00 a.m. on November 20.

For more information, see the [*Commission's website*](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

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