

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



Battle Flag Stabilization

Purpose and History

The General Assembly enacted 1892 Iowa Acts, Chapter 78, SF 374 ([Preservation of Standards and Battle Flags Act](#)) to direct the Adjutant General and the Curator of Historical Collections to display the standards and battle flags carried by Iowa regiments and batteries during the Civil War in sealed glass cases for display and preservation. The execution of this Act resulted in [Battle Flag Day](#) on August 10, 1894, and 135 battle flags were placed in hermetically sealed glass cases. Eventually, six glass display cases on the first floor of the Iowa State Capitol held battle flags from the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I.

Over the years, the manner in which the battle flags were displayed in the Capitol increased the deterioration of the flags. In 1999, the General Assembly allocated \$50,000 from the Capitol interior restoration appropriation and required the [Department of Cultural Affairs](#) (DCA) to conduct a study concerning the stabilization of the condition of the battle flags. The study findings were presented in the report "Iowa Battle Flag Collection: Recommendations for Stabilization and Use" in June 2000.

The report concluded that because responsibility for care of the Capitol flag collection was never assigned, the flags were left neglected and deteriorating. The report's recommendations for future actions included:

- Assign responsibility for the management and care of the flag collection.
- Provide the assignee with funding and staff to adequately carry out the mandate.
- Secure adequate museum quality space to perform the necessary conservation procedures for the initial stabilization of the flag collection.
- Secure adequate museum-quality space for the long-term preservation and utilization of the collection for the benefit of the public and scholars through exhibits, publications, and research.
- Establish a four-year flag conservation program for the removal of the flags from the cases and preparation for long-term preservation.

The objective of the initial Battle Flag Project was to stabilize all battle flags in the collection, and that core objective has been met (all flags stabilized). During FY 2015 and FY 2016, the DCA staff performed the following tasks for the Battle Flag Project:

- Conducted full inventory of the battle flag collection.
- Improved battle flag records with the addition of associated regiment histories and search terms.
- Installed 14 battle flags for a five-month exhibition at the State Historical Museum (March – July 2015).
- Installed quarterly flag rotations at the State Capitol.
- Conducted research of battle flag projects in other states and compiled findings.
- Organized all object, research, and project files.
- Read floppy disks of images pulled from paper files (358 disks).
- Reset of battle flag lab to accommodate new cabinets needed to properly store battle flags and accessories.
- Transcribed and reconciled flag lists so that information could be stored digitally, accessed by museum staff, and added to database records when appropriate.

Now that battle flag records, files, and inventory are organized, consideration will be given by the DCA to hire a textile consultant to review the work of the Project and make recommendations of what battle flags, if any, should have conservation work completed.

Funding — State Funding

Since FY 2000, the General Assembly has appropriated a total of \$2.2 million, through FY 2016, for the Battle Flag Stabilization Project. Funding came from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund from FY 2000 to FY 2011. Beginning in FY 2012, annual appropriations have been made from the General Fund in the Economic Development Appropriations Act.

More Information

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs: <http://www.culturalaffairs.org/>

Iowa General Assembly: www.legis.iowa.gov

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Funding — Other Sources of Revenue

The DCA received two one-time federal grants totaling \$80,000 in FY 2006. The first was from the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) for preservation of the flags; the second was from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) for rehousing flags from the Spanish-American War. Both of these grants concluded in 2006.

Under the authority of Iowa Code section [303.9](#), the DCA accepts private donations for the purpose of individual projects and deposits them in a trust account. As of November 2015, the trust account for the Battle Flag Stabilization Project has collected approximately \$48,000. The last transfer from the trust account was \$35,000 in FY 2006, in anticipation of a costly preservation of flags by an outside professional preservation company that was paid in FY 2009.

The 2012 General Assembly created The Battle Flag Restoration Fund under the control of the DCA. Money in the Fund is appropriated to the DCA for the continuation of the project. The Fund contains money appropriated by the General Assembly, donations, and proceeds from insurance settlements relating to incidences involving battle flags that have been loaned to other states or entities. As of November 2015, no money has been collected for this Fund.

Related Statute

Iowa Code section [303.2\(2\)\(k\)](#)

Revised August 30, 2016