



Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission 2025 Annual Report



I. VA250 Powers and Duties, Membership, and Meetings



The Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250) was created by the General Assembly for the purpose of commemorating the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, the Revolutionary War, and the independence of the United States (2020 Acts, c. 914).

A statutory change in 2023 situated the Commission within the legislative branch, retaining the same powers and duties (2023 Acts, cc. 655, 656). Primary among those are the formulation and implementation of a program for the inclusive observance of the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States and the Revolutionary War in Virginia, including:

- Civic, cultural, and historical education and scholarship concerning the ideals of the American Revolution and their contemporary relevance
- Visitation of museums and historic sites, including battlefields
- Creation and publication of historical documents and studies
- Cooperation with agencies responsible for the preservation or restoration of historic sites, buildings, art, and artifacts
- Establishment of exhibitions and interpretive and wayfinding signage
- Arrangement of appropriate public ceremonies
- Comprehensive marketing and tourism campaign encompassing CY 2025 through 2026
- General dissemination of public information regarding Virginia's involvement in the American Revolution and its legacy today

Commission members and leaders, including new members appointed in 2024, are below:

**The Honorable Terry L. Austin	<i>VA250 Chair, Virginia House of Delegates</i>
**The Honorable Mamie E. Locke	<i>VA250 Vice Chair, Senate of Virginia</i>
**Carly Fiorina	<i>VA250 National Honorary Chair</i>
**H. Benson Dendy III	<i>President, Virginia Commemorations, Inc.</i>
Cheryl Wilson	<i>VA250 Executive Director</i>
**The Honorable Alex Q. Askew	<i>Virginia House of Delegates</i>
**Chief Stephen R. Adkins	<i>Chickahominy Indian Tribe</i>
**Edward H. Baine	<i>Dominion Energy Virginia</i>
Jean Ann Bolling	<i>Mechanicsville, Virginia</i>
**Jamie O. Bosket	<i>Virginia Museum of History and Culture</i>
Dr. Douglas Bradburn	<i>Mount Vernon</i>
Gretchen Bulova	<i>Office of Historic Alexandria</i>
Gloria Marrero Chambers	<i>Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Board of Trustees</i>
Dennis Clark	<i>Library of Virginia</i>
**Christy S. Coleman	<i>Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation</i>
David Duncan	<i>American Battlefield Trust</i>
**Clifford B. Fleet	<i>Colonial Williamsburg Foundation</i>
Sue Gerdelman	<i>Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Board of Trustees</i>
**The Honorable Aimee R. Guidera	<i>Secretary of Education</i>
Peter Hedlund	<i>Virginia Humanities</i>
Dr. Jane Kamensky	<i>Monticello</i>
**The Honorable Paul E. Krizek	<i>Virginia House of Delegates</i>
Julie Langan	<i>Department of Historic Resources</i>
Jerri Marr	<i>Colonial National Historical Park</i>
The Honorable Elizabeth McClanahan	<i>Former Justice, Supreme Court of Virginia</i>
Rita McClenny	<i>Virginia Tourism Corporation</i>
**The Honorable Ryan T. McDougle	<i>Member, Senate of Virginia</i>
Eric Monday	<i>Virginia Bar Association</i>
**The Honorable Thomas K. Norment	<i>Former Member, Senate of Virginia</i>
**The Honorable Kenneth R. Plum	<i>Former Member, Virginia House of Delegates</i>
Alyson Ramsey	<i>Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest</i>
Katherine A. Rowe	<i>William & Mary</i>
Chief Anne Richardson	<i>Rappahannock Tribe</i>
Jackie Stone	<i>McGuireWoods LLP</i>
**Scott M. Stroh III	<i>Gunston Hall</i>

***Member of Executive Committee*

Commission Meetings

In addition to the full Commission, several advisory bodies have been raised to expand the voice of the Commission. The full listing of VA250 entities is below; agendas, minutes, and materials for each meeting can be found at VA250.org/meetings.

VA250 Full Commission and Executive Committee

Delegate Terry Austin, Chair

Full Commission: January 7, 2025 (GAB, Richmond)

Full Commission: October 15, 2024 (GAB, Richmond)

Executive Committee: September 30, 2024 (Virtual)

Executive Committee: August 29, 2024 (GAB, Richmond)

Full Commission: July 17, 2024 (GAB, Richmond)

Full Commission: April 16, 2024 (GAB, Richmond)

Executive Committee: April 9, 2024 (Virtual)

Full Commission: January 5, 2024 (GAB, Richmond)

African American Advisory Council

Senator Mamie Locke, Chair

October 29, 2024 (Fort Monroe)

May 21, 2024 (Virtual)

March 29, 2024 (Fort Monroe)

Education Steering Committee

Secretary Aimee Guidera, Chair

December 20, 2024 (Virtual)

October 1, 2024 (VMHC, Richmond)

Tribal Nations Leadership Council

Chief Stephen Adkins, Chair

May 3, 2024 (VMHC, Richmond)

March 15, 2024 (Colonial Williamsburg)

January 31, 2024 (VMHC)

Meeting agendas and minutes may be accessed at VA250.org/meetings.

In addition to the formal entities listed above, partner organizations also work collaboratively to coordinate and share planning efforts for the 250th across Virginia:

- Each locality has formed a Local 250 Committee (134 counties and cities)
- A dedicated volunteer corps has stepped forward to support VA250 events across the state
- Museums and historic homes are convened by the Virginia Association of Museums
- A cross-disciplinary marketing workgroup is led by the Virginia Tourism Corporation
- “Conveners” – directors of statewide associations, chambers of commerce, community leaders, and heads of organizations in the public and private sectors – are coordinated by Honorary Chair Fiorina to activate and amplify VA250 through their organizations
- University and college athletic associations are creating plans to incorporate VA250 branding into their 2025-26 seasons (per HJR 84, 2024)

II. Vision, goals, and statewide engagement



Virginia’s semiquincentennial is not simply about our past. It is a powerful opportunity to connect our nation’s founding ideals, born in Virginia and by Virginians, with our present and future. By commemorating these pivotal moments, we not only honor the sacrifices and triumphs of the past but also reaffirm our commitment to **forming a more perfect union**. Our founders knew there was more work required 250 years ago, and work remains to be done.

The overarching goals of VA250 are:

- to **educate** Virginians, including our students, about our history, our founding ideals and our system of government;
- to **engage** every community and all regions in events that tell a complete story; and
- to **inspire** Virginians to recommit to the values inherent in American citizenship.

VIRGINIA'S HISTORY IS AMERICA'S STORY

Virginia's History is America's Story. Virginia has always been the crucible of our nation, from our founding to the present day. The first colonists arrived in Virginia. The first encounters with Indigenous peoples occurred here. The first ships carrying the enslaved landed here. The first representative government was formed here. The famous speeches, critical debates and major events that led to the movement for independence and sparked a revolution all happened in Virginia. The Fincastle Resolutions, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution, every key founding document, were all written by Virginians.

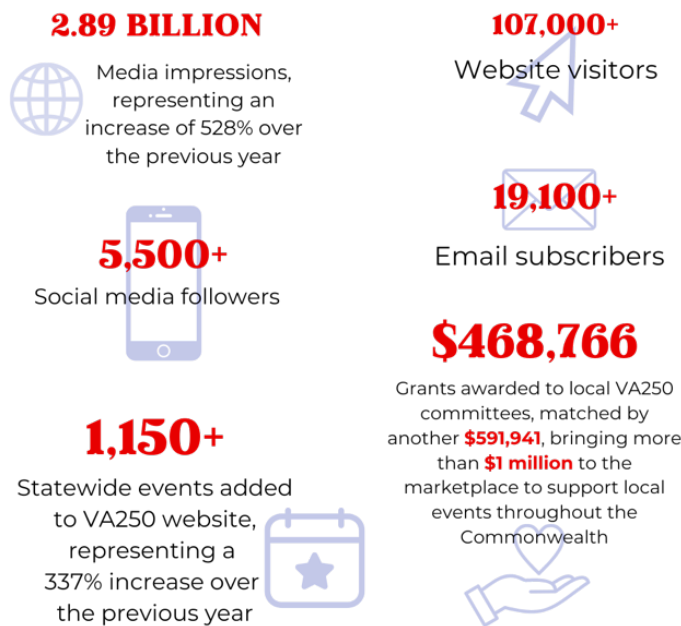
Our founders understood their work was only the beginning of building a great nation. They structured our government to empower us to repair our faults. Let us appreciate our role as citizens to continue that work and recommit to do our part to form a more perfect union.

III. Summary of 2024 Activities

VA250 is a key national leader in the semiquincentennial commemoration, driving innovative programming, fostering collaboration across communities, and setting a benchmark for meaningful, inclusive, and transformative observances nationwide. Looking ahead, 2025 promises even greater opportunities to celebrate our shared heritage and inspire future generations.

2024: A Year in Review at a Glance

ANALYTICS



Analytics

- **Media impressions: 2.89 billion**, representing an increase of 528% over the previous year
- **Website visitors: 107,000+**
- **Email subscribers: 19,100+**
- **Social media followers: 5,500+**
- **Statewide events added to VA250 website: 1,150+**, representing a 337% increase over the previous year
- **Grants awarded to local VA250 committees: \$468,766**, matched by another **\$591,941**, bringing more than **\$1 million** to the marketplace to support local events throughout the Commonwealth

Signature Events

In 2024, a series of Signature Events brought together individuals and communities to honor pivotal moments in history, celebrate our shared heritage, and inspire future generations. Events highlighted the 250th anniversary of America's founding and featured dynamic programming, thought-provoking discussions, and cultural celebrations. From the nationally recognized convening of planners in Colonial Williamsburg to the Independence Day festivities at the Virginia State Capitol, and dozens of local events in between, each exemplified the spirit of collaboration and reflection with which VA250 has become synonymous. The Signature Events of 2024 underscored the diverse narratives that define America's story and invited participants to connect deeply with both the past and the present.



A Common Cause to All: A Convening of States March 18-20, 2024

State planners gathered for a second time at The Williamsburg Lodge for three days of collaboration and unity ahead of the 250th commemoration. Nearly **450 planners** from **37 states** and **44 Virginia localities** registered for the conference. Hosted by the **VA250 Commission** and the **Colonial Williamsburg Foundation**, this gathering provided a platform for attendees to participate in meaningful discussions about the upcoming 250th anniversary of the nation. This gathering featured keynotes from Governor Glenn Youngkin, Supreme Court of Virginia Justice John Charles Thomas, Harvard Professor Danielle Allen, NBC News Correspondent Harry Smith, and VA250 National Honorary Chair Carly Fiorina. Social media impressions exceeded 3.9 million during the event, reflecting consumers' interest in the discussions addressing historical complexities and diverse narratives of America's founding. To close the program, attendees were invited to a special presentation by Colonial Williamsburg, reenacting the Virginian response to the "shock of electricity" that was the Boston Tea Party. What started as a "day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer" turned into more robust protesting against the British which sparked the flames of revolution. *Full report from A Common Cause to All is included as Appendix A.*

Independence Day Celebration at the Virginia State Capitol July 4, 2024

The July 4 festivities at the Virginia State Capitol attracted an impressive 2,500 registrants from 76 localities across Virginia and seven additional states, transforming the heart of our Commonwealth into a vibrant hub of patriotic unity, cultural celebration, and historical reflection. Highlights included a statewide bell ringing ceremony and the Square Fair with interactive booths from museums and historic homes showcasing Virginia’s history and culture. The Grand Ceremony featured inspiring speeches from Governor Glenn Youngkin, Speaker of the House Don Scott, Chief Stephen Adkins, and VA250 National Honorary Chair Carly Fiorina, complemented by performances from the Quantico Marine Corps Band and the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra. The day ended with a mesmerizing drone light show above the Virginia State Capitol Building, bringing an inspirational and dazzling conclusion to the evening.

Full report from Independence Day at the Virginia State Capitol is included as Appendix B.



Other seminal events of 2024 included:

Opening of the Capitol Exhibit

(January 2024)



**250th Anniversary
of the Purchase of Natural Bridge by
Thomas Jefferson
(July 5, 2024)**



**250th Anniversary of the
Fairfax Resolves (July 19, 2024)**



**African Landing Day and Soil Blending Ceremony at
Fort Monroe (August 24, 2024)**



**Reading Revolution Week in Schools
(October 14-18, 2024)**

Bicentennial of Lafayette’s Grand Tour
(October 2024 – ongoing)



Yorktown Tea Party Anniversary
(November 7-9, 2024)

IV. Looking Ahead to 2025

In 2025, Virginia will continue to lead the nation’s semiquincentennial commemoration with a series of large-scale Signature Events that highlight the critical moments and contributions that shaped America’s founding. From Southwest Virginia to Hampton Roads, these events will span the Commonwealth, offering opportunities to engage with our history, celebrate our heritage, and honor the resilience and unity that define our nation.

Highlights include the debut of the Mobile Museum Exhibition, the 250th anniversaries of pivotal events such as Patrick Henry’s iconic “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech, the Battle of Great Bridge, and Dunmore’s Proclamation, as well as community-wide celebrations like Juneteenth celebrations and the Independence Day festivals in Roanoke and at Fort Monroe. From landmark anniversaries to engaging educational initiatives, Virginia will continue setting the standard for meaningful and impactful commemoration, solidifying its role as a leader in the nation’s 250th anniversary.

2025

<i>Saturday, January 18th</i>	A Salute to Southwest Virginia: Fincastle Resolutions 250th and debut of Mobile Museum Exhibition
<i>Wednesday, March 19th</i> <i>Sunday, March 23rd</i>	Exclusive opening of “Give Me Liberty” Signature Exhibition Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech
<i>Monday, March 24th -</i> <i>Wednesday, March 26th</i>	“A Common Cause to All”
<i>Friday, April 11th &</i> <i>Saturday, April 12th</i>	Two Lights for Tomorrow
<i>Sunday, April 20th</i>	250th Anniversary of the Gunpowder Incident
<i>Friday, April 25th</i>	250th Anniversary of the Armed Forces International Tattoo
<i>Saturday, June 14th</i>	U.S. Army Birthday (National Museum of the U.S. Army)
<i>Sunday, June 22nd</i>	Juneteenth FreedomFest Celebration in Hampton Roads
<i>Thursday, July 3rd</i>	Independence Day Freedom Festival in Roanoke
<i>Friday, July 4th</i>	Independence Day Celebration at Fort Monroe
<i>Saturday, October 26th</i>	250th Anniversary of the Battle of Hampton
<i>Friday, November 7th</i>	250th Anniversary of Dunmore’s Proclamation
<i>Monday, November 10th</i>	VA250 Marine Corps and Armed Forces 250th Celebration (Virginia War Memorial)
<i>Tuesday, November 11th</i>	VA250 Veterans Day Program (Virginia War Memorial)
<i>Saturday, November 15th</i>	250th Anniversary of the Battle of Kemps Landing
<i>Tuesday, December 9th</i>	250th Anniversary of the Battle of Great Bridge

V. Grants to support statewide 250th initiatives

VA250 grant programs have successfully extended their impact across the Commonwealth, empowering local communities to bring history to life through innovative programming and fostering a deeper connection to Virginia's central role in the American Revolution. The Commission offers three grant funding streams, with awards requiring a 1:1 ratio by the locality:

- **VTC – VA250 Marketing Leverage Grants:** Three rounds of grants were held in 2024. 27 localities received VA250 grants, cumulatively awarding \$221,162 to local committees, which was matched by another \$332,067, resulting in **\$553,229** for marketing of events throughout the Commonwealth.
- **Virginia Humanities – VA250 Grants:** The second round of VH-VA250 grants awarded \$142,222 to 16 local committees, which was matched by another \$249,951, resulting in **\$259,874** for programs, exhibitions, and events throughout the Commonwealth.
- **Virginia Commission for the Arts – VA250:** The inaugural round of VCA-VA250 grants awarded **\$105,382** to 23 applicants in every region of the Commonwealth. These annual awards do not require a match, providing up to \$4,500 per recipient to support arts related to the commemoration.

See Appendix D for a complete list of grants approved by the Commission in 2024.



VI. Conclusion

The VA250 Commission's work in 2024 has solidified Virginia's leadership in commemorating the nation's 250th anniversary, and we extend our gratitude to our partners, sponsors, and local committees whose efforts made 2024 a resounding success. From transformative events to impactful community engagements, together we have ensured that Virginia's pivotal role in America's founding is commemorated and remembered. As we look toward 2025, we are committed to building on our successes, fostering unity, and inspiring a deeper understanding of our shared history. Together, we will continue to honor the past, celebrate the present, and shape a future grounded in the ideas and ideals that founded our nation.

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VA250.org

The logo for VA250.ORG features the letters 'VA' in blue with a white star inside the 'A', followed by '250' in red, and '.ORG' in grey.

APPENDIX A



A Common Cause to All – A Convening of States on the 250th Anniversary of the Dissolution of the Virginia House of Burgesses – March 2024

State planners gathered for a second time in Colonial Williamsburg for three days of collaboration and unity for the 250th commemoration. Nearly 450 planners from 37 states and 44 Virginia localities registered for the conference as the nation prepares for its semiquincentennial commemoration.

Hosted by the VA250 Commission and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, this gathering provided a platform for attendees to participate in meaningful discussions about the upcoming 250th anniversary of the nation. The diverse group of speakers, including **Governor Glenn Youngkin** and **Justice John Charles Thomas**, brought unique perspectives to the table, inspiring enriching discussions.

The three-day conference featured a mix of inspiring keynotes, thought-provoking discussions, and a shared commitment to telling a comprehensive American story. From **Governor Youngkin's** call to delve into our collective past to **NBC News Correspondent Harry Smith's** emphasis on the diverse stories that weave the American fabric, the energy crackled with the promise of a commemoration that honors all voices.

Retired Virginia Supreme Court Justice John Charles Thomas challenged attendees to confront the complexities of history, urging them to move beyond a simplistic "melting pot" narrative to a rich tapestry reflecting the struggles and triumphs of all communities.

Harvard Professor Danielle Allen challenged attendees to acknowledge the limitations of the Declaration of Independence while celebrating its core values. **VA250 National Honorary Chair Carly Fiorina** echoed this sentiment, urging the commemoration to showcase America's potential for a more united future.

Smithsonian Institution Under Secretary Kevin Gover emphasized presenting historical facts, not opinions, while **National Constitution Center President Jeffrey Rosen** highlighted the urgency of educating the public about the Declaration's principles.

Breakout sessions tackled critical issues like engaging educators, crafting impactful digital experiences, and fostering collaboration across state lines. Attendees left empowered, not just by the knowledge gleaned, but by the shared spirit of "A Common Cause to All."

Capping off the program, attendees enjoyed a special presentation by Colonial Williamsburg. This reenactment depicted Virginia's reaction to the electrifying news of the Boston Tea Party. Initially marked as a day of somber reflection – fasting, humiliation, and prayer – the event pivoted towards a more forceful response against British rule. Lord Dunmore, Virginia's final royal governor, only fueled the flames of revolution by dissolving the House of Burgesses, the colony's representative body.

By the numbers...

Nearly **450 planners from 37 states and 44 Virginia localities** registered for the conference, staying in hotels and enjoying restaurants throughout the Historic Triangle. News coverage included articles from the Virginian-Pilot, CNBC Squawkbox, Williamsburg-Yorktown Daily, and Shore Daily News.

Social media impressions were more than 3.9 million (March 17 – April 4). The VA250 website saw an increase of **10.3% in traffic** (6,700 visitors from March 1 – April 4, 2024, compared to the previous period of 6,100 visitors Jan 26 – Feb 29, 2024). The landing page saw 5,545 pageviews over the past year and was the 4th most viewed page on the website during that time.

Total expenses of A Common Cause to All are estimated at \$432,021.56

VA250 Expenditures

Category The A/V	Amount	Notes
Company	\$82,439.00	
Food and beverage	\$81,270.40	Per diem amount per registrant
Travel	\$5,497.91	
Photography	\$2,037.48	
Program printing	\$2,560.00	
Supplies	\$762.19	Name badges, etc.
Total	\$174,566.98	

Other Expenditures

Category	Amount	Notes
	\$240,000.00	All CWF expenditures
Colonial Williamsburg Fndn VMHC	\$16,093.50	Danielle Allen honorarium and travel
JYF	\$1,361.08	Travel for a panelist
Total	\$257,454.58	

Presentations, Distinguished Guests and Speakers included:

Friday Keynote Speaker



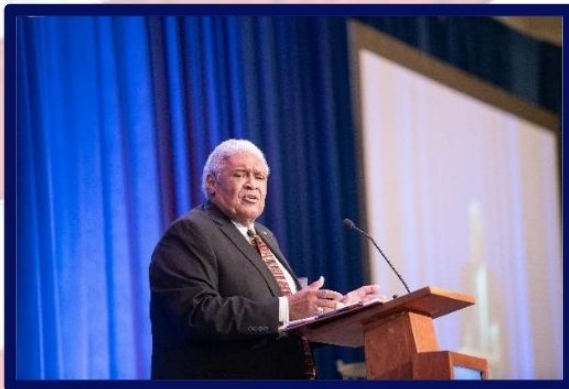
Governor Glenn Youngkin
Governor of Virginia

Friday Keynote Speaker



Harry Smith *NBC News Correspondent*

Tuesday Morning Keynote Remarks



Justice John Charles Thomas
Supreme Court of Virginia (retired)

Fireside Chat with Jefferson and Early American Scholars



Woody Holton, *University of South Carolina*
Jane Kamensky, *The Thomas Jefferson Foundation & Monticello*

Research Report: Approaches to Public Engagement



Matt Williams, *Brand Federation*

Our Journey to 2026



Rosie Rios, *America250*

**Presentation: The American Revolution
by Ken Burns**



Paula Kerger, *PBS*
Sarah Botstein, *Award-Winning Producer
and Filmmaker*

Tuesday Breakout Sessions



Reaching Teachers and Students in Schools,
Providing Impactful Digital and Virtual Content,
2026 National Planning, Public History in
Polarized Times, & Funding Your
250th

States Dinner Keynote Remarks



Danielle Allen, *Harvard University*

States Dinner Keynote Remarks



Carly Fiorina, *VA250 National Honorary
Chair Chair, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*

Wednesday Morning Keynote Remarks



Kevin Gover, *Smithsonian Institution*

**Fireside Chat: Reaching Diverse and
Underserved Communities**



Christy Coleman, *Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation*; Dr.
Ashley Jordan, *African American Museum in PA*;
Marvin-Alonzo Greer, *Maryland-National Capital Park
& Planning Commission*; Dr. Noelle Trent, *Museum of
African American History*

**Fireside Chat: Multistate Collaboration
for 250th Programs Nationwide**



Cheryl Wilson, *VA250 Commission*; Jonathan Lane, *Massachusetts Revolution 250*; Jonah Spivak, *Vermont 250th Commission*; Kevin Hampton, *The Wisconsin Veterans Museum*

Breakout Group



State 250th Planners

Breakout Group



Local VA250 Committees

Closing Keynote



Jeffrey Rosen, *National Constitution Center*



Suzanne Youngkin, *First Lady of Virginia*



Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares & Virginia Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears

What people are saying...

"What an inspiring experience! I left excited for 250. Justice Thomas blew the roof off. Harry Smith was a treat. The lunch buffet on Tuesday was the best meal. I'll be talking about the oyster soup for awhile."



"The conference was outstanding. The venue, food and speakers were wonderful. The fireworks display in the garden of the Governor's Palace was a memory not to be forgotten."

Virginia

"I felt like a queen the entire time. Nothing like bringing together great people over great food discussing the real issues of the nation. Have not attended anything quite like it. Very fired up afterwards to get to work!"

Virginia



"The quality in speakers and conference content was impressive and really outshined the national effort."

Idaho



"Networking was invaluable. I made some great new connections. The whole experience was superb!"

Ohio



"As a tourism and marketing professional, I was fascinated by how much I learned so quickly about our founding fathers and the moral philosophy that guides their pursuits."

Georgia



“It was great meeting new people and seeing how everyone is navigating America's history in light of the 250th. The hospitality of Colonial Williamsburg was impeccable and getting able to wander around the historical section was amazing.”

New York



“This was an amazing event. I was truly inspired to come back to my community and kickoff our local celebration of the 250th anniversary of this great nation. I met so many wonderful people and garnered some ideas from what others are doing.”

Maryland

A Closer Look at Numbers

- Social Media Impact (March 2024)***

Social Platform	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	LinkedIn	Total
Reach/Impressions	7,772	675 334 +	3,847	19,126	31,420
Engagement	1,900 +	117		882 +	3,116
Follows from March 2024	139		+ 39	135	+ 430

- Website Impact – March 17 – April 4 compared to January 26 – February 29***

	Users +	Views +
VA250 Website Common	10.3%	11.5% +
Cause Event Page	+109.88 %	94.25%

- In the Media***

March 26, 2024 – Shore Daily News

VA250 CONFERENCE CALLS FOR UNITY IN AMERICA’S 250TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

March 20, 2024 – The Virginian-Pilot – Sam Schaffer

Finding Our Common Cause for America’s 250th Birthday

March 17, 2024 – WY Daily

Colonial Williamsburg, VA250 to Host Second Planning Event for America’s 250th

APPENDIX B

VA250

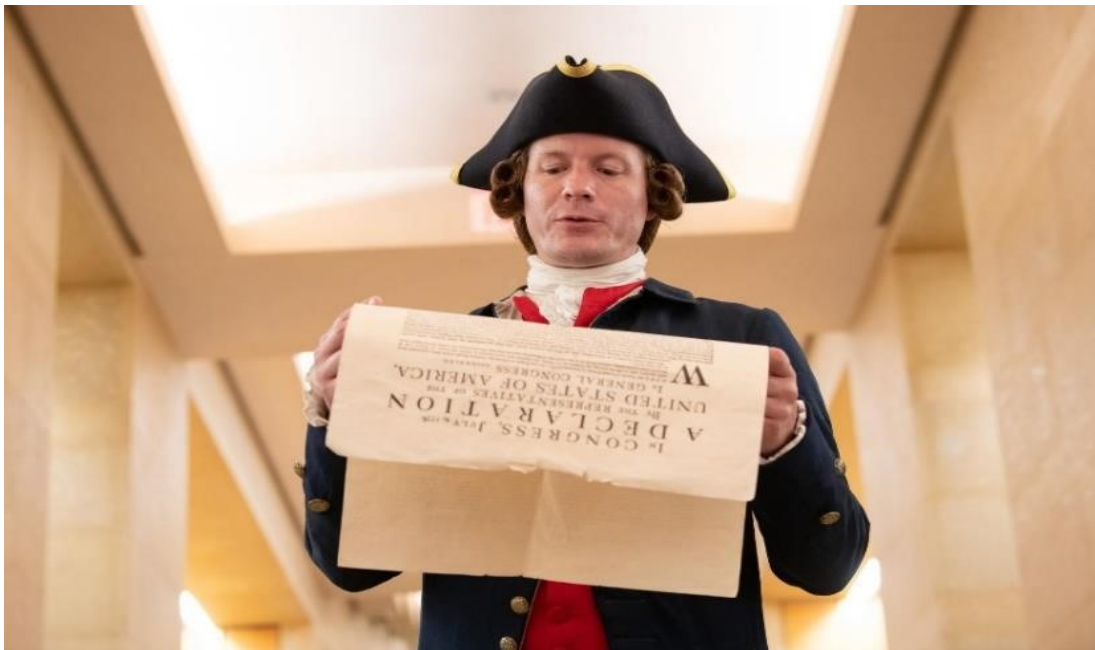


VIRGINIA STATE CAPITOL

Toward a More Perfect Union: A Celebration of Freedom and Our Nation's Founding

“...I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival... with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more...” – John Adams, 1776

Inspired by John Adams' vision, VA250 brought the majestic grounds of the State Capitol to life as a vibrant hub of activity that showcased Virginians from all walks of life. The energy, the music, the sense of community – it was truly a night to remember.



Thomas Jefferson, portrayed by Colonial Williamsburg's Kurt Smith, opened the celebration with a reading of the Declaration of Independence inside the Virginia State Capitol.

🔔 A statewide celebration rings true

The day began with a stirring statewide bell ringing ceremony, featuring selections from iconic landmarks and institutions across the Commonwealth. From the bells at the [State Capitol](#), to the [Wilderness Road Regional Museum](#) in Dublin, to the [Military Women's Memorial](#) in Arlington, and many more places, Virginians from all corners of the state united in a powerful display of patriotism.



🌿 Square Fair: A celebration of Virginia's story

The afternoon unfolded with a lively Square Fair, highlighting Virginia's unique history and culture. Interactive booths and exhibitions from museums, cultural organizations, and artists brought the spirit of freedom to life. We were thrilled to see so many families enjoying the diverse activities!



Grand Ceremony: Inspiring words and thrilling performances

The Grand Ceremony featured a lineup of distinguished speakers, including Governor Glenn Youngkin, First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates Don Scott, PBS News Hour Co-Ancor Geoff Bennett (Master of Ceremonies), VA250 Chair Delegate Terry Austin, VA250 Vice Chair Senator Mamie Lock, Chickahominy Indian Tribe Chief Stephen Adkins, and VA250 National Honorary Chair Carly Fiorina. Their inspiring words resonated with the audience, reminding us of the core values of freedom.

The ceremony was further enriched by captivating performances from the Colonial Williamsburg Fifes & Drums, the DAY Program, Quantico Marine Corps Band, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, New Fellowship Gospel Choir, and Virginia's Tribal Nations.



The New Fellowship Gospel Choir and Roanoke Symphony Orchestra performing at the Capitol.

A dazzling finale lights up the night sky

As twilight fell, a breathtaking drone light show produced by Grucci painted the night sky with dazzling colors and patterns, leaving everyone in awe.



A shared experience across Virginia

The outpouring of support for this event was truly heartwarming. With over 2,500 people registered from 76 Virginia localities and seven states, it was a testament to the unifying power of freedom and celebration.

By the Numbers

◆ 2,504 registrants from 76 localities across Virginia and seven states

Square Fair (5 pm – 7 pm)

◆ 24 participants offering family-friendly activities, including:

- Science Museum of Virginia
- Virginia Tourism Corporation
- Visit Hampton
- Fort Monroe
- Hampton University Museum
- Monticello
- Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest
- Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
- Gunston Hall
- National Museum of the United States Army
- Heart of Virginia Artisans
- Robert Russa Moton Museum
- The Richmond Forum
- Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe
- Nottoway Indian Tribe
- Nansemond Indian Tribe

◆ Statewide Tolling of Bells (echoed across the state by at least 20 localities across the state, many of whom posted videos to social media)

◆ Open House at Virginia's Executive Mansion

◆ Performances at the Bell Tower

- Reading of the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, as portrayed by Kurt Smith of Colonial Williamsburg
- Peter Lee Hamilton, Winner, 2023 UVA Student Oratory Competition
- Petersburg High Crimson Wave Forensics Team
- Colonial Williamsburg Fifes and Drums
- The DAY Program West African Drumming Ensemble
- Intense Fiyaaaaa Fitness Caribbean Dance Ensemble

Grand Ceremony (7:30 pm – 9 pm)

◆ Musical performances by:

- Indigenous Drum: Virginia's Tribal Nations
- West African Drummers: The DAY Program
- Fifes and Drums: Colonial Williamsburg
- Roanoke Symphony and Orchestra
- New Fellowship Gospel Choir
- Quantico Marine Corps Band

◆ Remarks by:

- The Honorable Terry Austin, Chair and The Honorable Mamie Locke, Vice Chair
- Chief Stephen Adkins, Chickahominy Indian Tribe
- The Honorable Don Scott, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates
- The Honorable Glenn Youngkin, Governor of Virginia and First Lady Suzanne Youngkin
- Carly Fiorina, VA250 National Honorary Chair
- Outreach beyond Capitol Square: Webcast views and Media

◆ The Grand Ceremony was webcast live, with 928 views during the performance. The archived video and full photo gallery are available at VA250.org

Interviews with every local news outlet and Fox5 DC (Richmond outlets: WWBT, WRIC, WTVR, Fox35, Connect Richmond, Richmond Times-Dispatch)

Social media engagement increased exponentially, particularly with short video reels