



250th Anniversaries and Key Special Events Plans in Development

The 250th anniversary of the nation’s independence (the nation’s semiquincentennial) is not just coming – it’s here, and Virginia plays a leading role in the national commemoration.

With the power of place . . . power of ideas. . . and power of history, Virginia’s history IS America’s story. Virginia’s commemoration is guided by the following pillars:

Our Vision

From Revolution to Renewal: A Recommitment to “Form a More Perfect Union.”

Guiding Principles

- We are patriotic and proud because our history is inspiring, and we have changed the world for the better.
- We are honest and forthright because our history is also complex and difficult.
- We are empathetic and collaborative because we know this is a commemoration for all Virginians, and we are transparent and accountable because we know that every stakeholder must have confidence in our decision-making.
- We embrace the fundamental concept of liberty and freedom and unlocking the unbridled potential that is inherent in every person.

Goals

- To EDUCATE Americans about the central role Virginia and Virginians played in building a new nation.
- To INSPIRE Americans with the ideals of our founders and the principles of our founding documents.
- To RE-ENGAGE Americans, by telling the whole story of our founding, connecting with every community on a personal level, so that our history belongs to everyone.

Call to Action



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 RE-COMMIT to do our part “. . . to form a more perfect union.”

Commemoration Architecture

In addition to nine signature events throughout 2024, 2025 and 2026; programming throughout the Commonwealth in each community; and mobile museum programs; there will be annual themes with specific programming:

2024: A CELEBRATION OF OUR FOUNDERS

Special programming to explore the contributions of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Mason and George Washington will be held at Monticello, Montpelier, Gunston Hall, and Mt. Vernon.

A national July 4th event will be held in Richmond. Interpreters of our founding fathers as well as the Governor will make addresses.

2025: A CELEBRATION OF AMERICA’S ROLE IN THE WORLD

Ambassadors from around the world will convene to honor the global legacy of American democracy. This event will explore how other nations shaped American democracy during its inception and how America, in turn, influenced the world. Ambassadors will engage in discussions about the challenges and opportunities faced by democracies today and celebrate our shared role in the world.

A national July 4th event will be held at Mt. Vernon.

2026: A CELEBRATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Naturalization ceremonies will occur throughout the Commonwealth. Citizens will join in taking the oath of citizenship and recommit to the values of being an American.

A national July 4th event will be held at Colonial Williamsburg, with key locations across the state connected by simulcast.

Plans in Development



As is fitting for the state that has always served as the crucible of the nation, Virginia's 250th commemoration will be second to none, and with proper funding, will achieve the following:

- **National impact and significance** as Virginia will, once again, set the standard for how to commemorate significant milestones – approaching history from multiple perspectives and through events and exhibitions that reflect the stories of all Virginians.
- **Multi-year series** of robust and **multi-faceted events**, including **three national Signature Events** each year and dozens of Virginia-specific anniversaries and events across every corner of the state.
- **Tremendous economic and tourism impact** as VA250 will both welcome the world to Virginia and, through technology, push Virginia out to the world.
- **Engage and involve every community**

The 250th will be a statewide celebration and commemoration that involves - and benefits - every locality and reflects our shared history through a lens with many facets. There will be a place for everyone in this commemoration. Programs will include:

- “Mobile museum” housed in a quad-expandable tractor-trailer that will bring a world-class exhibit directly to schools, museums, historic sites, and special events; and will serve as a showcase to the nation of why Virginia's History is America's Story.
- Museum exhibition at the VMHC and JYF that also includes a panel exhibition available for display in every locality.
- Robust program of grant support to localities that fund tourism and marketing initiatives, content development, and the promotion of arts events.
- Large-scale public events to mark key anniversary dates that include, among others, Patrick Henry's “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech, Virginia's Declaration of Rights, the nation's Independence Day, Sail250, and even the first meeting of the General Assembly.

Leading to 2026, VA250 will host **three National Signature Events** each year designed to bring the nation to Virginia, and dozens of **Virginia Signature Events** that mark key anniversaries and events across every corner of the state, positioning Virginia as the key destination for the 250th and ensuring lasting economic impact across the Commonwealth.

National Signature Events to draw the nation to Virginia include:



2024

- **“A Common Cause to All”**: Second Convening of States on the Nation’s 250th”
Williamsburg, March 18-20, 2024
- **Independence Day at Virginia’s State Capitol**: “*A Celebration of Our Nation’s Founders*” - Special programming to explore the contributions of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Mason and George Washington will be held at the Virginia State Capitol, in partnership with Monticello, Montpelier, Gunston Hall, and Mt. Vernon.
- **Bray School Restoration Completion**
Williamsburg, October 2024

2025

- **250th Anniversary of Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty” speech** at St. John’s Church, in conjunction with the third convening of states in “A Common Cause to All” March 23-25, 2025
- **Independence Day at Mount Vernon**: “*A Celebration of Our Role in the World*”
Ambassadors from around the world will convene to honor the global legacy of American democracy. This event will explore how other nations shaped American democracy during its inception and how America, in turn, influenced the world. Ambassadors will engage in discussions about the challenges and opportunities faced by democracies today and celebrate our shared role in the world.
- **250th Anniversary of Dunmore’s Proclamation** declaring martial law and emancipating indentured servants willing to fight for the British
Williamsburg, November 7, 2025

2026

- **250th Anniversary of Fifth Virginia Convention**: Virginia Declares Independence
Williamsburg, May 15, 2026
- **National Speech and Debate Association Tournament**
Richmond, June 13-19, 2026
- **Independence Day in Colonial Williamsburg**: “*A Celebration of Citizenship*”
Naturalization ceremonies will occur throughout the Commonwealth. Citizens will join in taking the oath of citizenship and recommit to the values of being an



American.

- **250th Anniversary of First Baptist Church**
Williamsburg, October 2026

Signature Events and Key Anniversary Dates

2023 Events (1773):

“A Common Cause to All: A Convening of States” Committees of Correspondence 250th (March 10-12, 2023 and annually through 2025) Colonial Williamsburg – Launching the 250th commemoration, Virginia leads the nation by facilitating collaboration, information sharing, and opportunities for states, local committees, and businesses to partner together during the semiquincentennial, signaling a shared commitment to a meaningful commemoration for Virginia, for every state, and for the nation. Based on the overwhelming success of the 2023 event, this will become an annual national conference.

For 2026: A Five-Year Conference Series Marking the 250th Anniversary of American Independence (October 2022 and annually through 2027) – In partnership with Omohundro Institute, William & Mary, and Colonial Williamsburg.

2024 Events (1774):

NATIONAL SIGNATURE EVENTS:

“A Common Cause to All: Second Annual Convening of States on the 250th” (March 18-20, 2024)
Colonial Williamsburg

Independence Day at Virginia’s State Capitol (July 4, 2024)

Bray School Restoration (Fall 2024) Ceremonies, tours, and talks by noted historians marking the completion of the Bray School Restoration, the oldest extant building dedicated to the education of Black children in the United States.

VIRGINIA SIGNATURE EVENTS:

Prince William Resolves 250th (June 8, 2024) – Prince William County was the first Virginia county to protest the passage of the Intolerable Acts. “Resolve & Revolution” will mark that key anniversary.

Fairfax Resolves 250th (July 18, 2024) - Key document that rejected the supremacy of British authority.



Resolution of the Freeholders of Albemarle County (July 2024) - Key document declaring that only their own legislature could rightfully exercise authority over citizens.

Launch of VA250 mobile exhibition (Fall 2024)

Lafayette Grand Tour 200th anniversary (Fall 2024) at multiple locations – Commemoration of Lafayette’s cross-country tour 50 years after the Revolutionary War (in 1824). Locations will include Charlottesville (Monticello), Fairfax County (Mount Vernon), Loudon County, Fredericksburg, Yorktown, and Washington, DC. For example, Fredericksburg is planning a large-scale city-wide event involving the National Park Service and multiple museums.

Battle of Point Pleasant (October 10, 2024) – Point Pleasant, West Virginia – 250th anniversary joint-state commemorative event featuring governors and dignitaries from West Virginia and Virginia, and representation of the 13 original colonies.

Fort Gower Resolves (November 2024) - Officers of Col. Andrew Lewis’ army declare that their love of liberty, and attachment to the real interests and just rights of America outweigh allegiance to the Crown [opportunities for commemoration in Salem/Roanoke area where Andrew Lewis lived].

Yorktown Tea Party 250th (Weekend of events, November 7 - 9, 2024)

2025 Events (1775):

NATIONAL SIGNATURE EVENTS:

****250th Anniversary of Patrick Henry’s “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech and “A Common Cause to All: Third Annual Convening of States on the 250th anniversary of a Revolution of Ideas”*** (Sunday, March 23 – Wednesday, March 26) St. John’s Church/Colonial Williamsburg - Major event with dramatic readings by national celebrities and famous Virginians

Independence Day at Mount Vernon (July 4, 2025) “A Celebration of Our Role in the World” Ambassadors from around the world will convene to honor the global legacy of American democracy. This event will explore how other nations shaped American democracy during its inception and how America, in turn, influenced the world. Ambassadors will engage in discussions about the challenges and opportunities faced by democracies today and celebrate our shared role in the world.

250th Anniversary of Dunmore’s Proclamation (November 7, 2025) Key document declaring martial law and emancipating indentured servants willing to fight for the British.

VIRGINIA SIGNATURE EVENTS:

Virginia Bar Association (VBA) and Virginia Law Foundation (VLF) Law Symposium (three-part conference series in 2025 and 2026) – “The Legal Revolution: Virginia Leads the Way to Liberty 1776-2026” Held at public law schools across Virginia, these seminars will examine the nation’s founding



documents and founding fathers, both as lawyers and as leaders, who enabled America to become the greatest example of individual liberty and opportunity in the world.

Fincastle Resolutions 250th (Monday, January 20, 2025) – First American pledge of resistance to tyranny unto death.

Opening of “Give Me Liberty” exhibition and debut of panel exhibition to travel throughout Virginia (March 22, 2025) Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond

250th Anniversary of the Gunpowder Incident (Sunday, April 20, 2025) Colonial Williamsburg

250th Anniversary of the Battle of Hampton (October 26, 2025)

250th Anniversary of the Battle of Kemps Landing (Saturday, November 15, 2025)

250th Anniversary of the Battle of Great Bridge (December 9, 1775/2025)

250th Anniversary of the Armed Forces – International Tattoo (March 2025)

Army (June 14)

Navy (October 13)

Marine Corps (November 10)

2026 Events (1776)

NATIONAL SIGNATURE EVENTS:

250th Anniversary of Fifth Virginia Convention: Virginia’s Independence Day (Friday, May 15, 2026) Williamsburg – Large-scale event marking Virginia’s declaration of independence. Interestingly, 250 years ago, Virginia was the first colony to mark its independence with fireworks. Those historical moments will be recreated in Colonial Williamsburg and broadcast to the nation.

National Speech and Debate Association Tournament (June 2026) The nation’s largest academic competition in the world will hold its National Tournament in Richmond, dovetailing with the World Cup Soccer tournament being held in cities along the East Coast at the same time, bringing the attention of the world to robust discussions of the ideas and ideals that were born in Virginia and created the nation.

Independence Day in Colonial Williamsburg: America’s 250th Birthday (July 4, 2026)

Events across the state will be linked by simulcast, with the key location being Colonial Williamsburg. Events throughout the weekend-long celebration will include:

- Statewide naturalization ceremony at key locations with nationally recognized speakers simulcast at prominent venues throughout the state; Invitation to citizens to rededicate themselves to the values and responsibilities of citizenship by reaffirming the oath of citizenship alongside newly-naturalized citizens
- Statewide tolling of bells 13 times at 2:00 pm on July 4 ([Joint Concurrent Res 25, 1963](#)).



- Cultural events from all walks of life
- Events to honor military and veterans.
- Keynote speakers, history talks, historical interpretation.
- Coordination, broadcast, and amplification of hundreds of local events across the state, including local ceremonies and parades
- Sequenced drone light shows and fireworks across the state with patriotic music

250th Anniversary of Formation of First Baptist Church (October 2026) Williamsburg – One of the country’s earliest African American congregations, founded by free and enslaved Black worshippers.

VIRGINIA SIGNATURE EVENTS:

250th Anniversary of the Burning of Norfolk (Thursday, January 1, 2026)

Opening of “Give Me Liberty” exhibition (April 2026) American Revolution Museum at Yorktown

Virginia International Tattoo (April 2026) Scope Arena, Norfolk. In tribute to the 250th anniversary of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, the Virginia International Tattoo will bring an international cast of more than 800 performers, including civilian and military bands and drill from seven nations, in a rousing and emotion-filled celebration of freedom.

Sail250® Virginia (June 12-14 and June 19-22, 2026) – Major statewide event featuring an international tall-ship docking in multiple ports in Virginia. Norfolk will serve as the host city for Sail250® Virginia, with Affiliate Events in multiple cities, when a fleet of the world’s most magnificent international tall ships and military ships will sail into the port of Virginia in an epic peacetime gathering. The fleet will bring extraordinary experiences and opportunities throughout the city. VA250 is proud to partner with Sail250® Virginia to extend its goodwill and education mission to a statewide audience, engaging and involving students and classrooms across the state through technology, including webcasts, virtual participation, and more.

250th Anniversary of Virginia Declaration of Rights (Friday, June 12, 2026) Gunston Hall

250th Anniversary of the First General Assembly (October 7, 2026) Williamsburg – Marks the first meeting of Virginia’s legislature as the General Assembly, rather than the House of Burgesses. The First General Assembly convened in regular session from October 7, 1776, to December 21, 1776. Speaker of the Assembly was Edmund Pendleton and Speaker of the Senate was Archibald Cary. Notable delegates were Thomas Jefferson (Albemarle), James Madison (Orange), George Mason (Fairfax), Richard Henry Lee and John Washington [brother of George Washington] (Westmoreland), and Richard Bland (Prince George).

250th Anniversary of Phi Beta Kappa (December 5, 2026) Williamsburg – The nation’s oldest undergraduate honor society was founded at the College of William & Mary. Phi Beta Kappa's first meeting took place on December 5, 1776, in the Apollo Room of the Raleigh Tavern.