

Virginia's Semiquincentennial

Virginia's Semiquincentennial is not simply about our past. How we commemorate our founding also impacts our **present** and our **future**. This is why the Virginia 250 Commission has chosen "**To Form a More Perfect Union**" as our theme.

Our founders knew there was more work required two hundred and fifty years ago, and work remains to be done. Our overreaching goals 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 commit to American citizenship.

Virginia's History is America's Story

Virginia's History is America's Story is more than a tagline on marketing collateral. 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 happened here. The Fincastle Resolutions, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were all **written by Virginians**.

Because of the leadership role Virginia has always played in our nation, **VA250 will lead the nation** in the celebration of our semiquincentennial. We convened members of other states' 250 planning commissions and America 250, in March 2023 at Colonial Williamsburg. We will reconvene this same group in March 2024 and 2025. We are also planning **July 4th events** of national significance in 2024, 2025 and 2026 in Richmond, Mt. Vernon and Colonial Williamsburg. Other signature national events are planned for the fall of each year, in addition to events throughout the Commonwealth. We are grateful to have the active participation of the **African-American Advisory Council** led by Senator Mamie Locke; the **Tribal Leaders Advisory Council** led by Chief Adkins; as well as planning groups in every region and localities across Virginia.

Events Across Virginia

Our many events across Virginia will have annual themes:



2024: A Celebration of our Founders: is a celebration of the importance of human freedom and the role of our founders. Being men of their times, our founders were slaveholders and did not believe the rights they espoused applied to anyone other than white, male property owners. Nevertheless, the words and leadership of Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, James Madison and George Washington changed the world forever and have **inspired every movement for liberty, dignity and equality everywhere and ever since**. As we design and build programming, we are grateful for the engagement of Mt. Vernon, Gunston Hall, Montpelier and Monticello as well as the descendent communities.



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. 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 be invited to 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.

The United States of America is the only nation in the world and throughout history not founded on ethnicity, religion, or territory. Rather, conceived in liberty, **our nation is founded on ideas, ideals** and a system of government that flows from them. When we no longer understand or appreciate the foundation of our country, we lose our identity as Americans. Tribalism, discord, and division deepen as we lose touch with who we are. Our semiquincentennial events should be more than fireworks. They must be an opportunity to remember why and how we are all Americans. Our semiquincentennial can be the **beginning of a new era of civic engagement**.

For more information please contact:

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