



VA250 Signature Event July 4 Celebration at the Virginia State Capitol Richmond

“Towards a More Perfect Union: A Celebration of Freedom and Our Nation’s Founding”
Thursday, July 4, 2024
4:00 pm – 9:00 pm

“...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

On July 4, 2024, the grounds of the State Capitol will answer John Adams’ call for a *great anniversary festival* of America’s independence. Unlike other celebrations of the Fourth of July which are confined to evening fireworks and a few patriotic songs, our celebration will see Capitol Square alive all afternoon with vibrant pop-up displays from museums, educators, cultural groups, and artists in a celebration of the human expression of what the Fourth of July means to all Virginians. Imagine the sights, sounds, and energy of Virginians from all walks of life engaging with *what Freedom means today* through performances of spoken word, dance, and music as a prelude to unifying and inspiring keynote remarks. Fireworks don’t just end the night—they signify our renewed commitment to *building a more perfect union*.

Part I: “Square Fair on the 4th”

4 pm: "Square Fair" event with Capitol Square full of:

- Pop-up museums and art displays (partner museums)
- Tours of Governor’s Mansion, State Capitol (interior), Capitol Grounds (exterior)
- Family friendly events (face-painting, Children’s Museum activities, story time, etc.)
- Information and activity tents
- Health screenings (Sentara)
- Partner booths and giveaways (agencies, Virginia Lottery, Dominion Energy, Richmond Kickers, tourism and museum partners, etc.)
- Period interpreters/historians
 - (Note: If any Naturalization Ceremonies are occurring in Virginia from 4 pm – 7 pm, will stream)

BIG TENT performances – scheduled every 30 minutes (4 pm – 7 pm)

Every measure of human expression: oratory, history talks, dance, music, etc.

- Reading of the Declaration of Independence (encourage localities to do the same; select a time and do Facebook Live)

- College oratory competition winner
- K-12 Student essay contest winners (DOE) – Winners from each of the 8 regions will be compiled into an essay pamphlet and read aloud
- Richmond Forum: Revolutionary Rhetoric (Sandy Wheeler/Heather Crislip); Forensic category: 10-minute oration /poetry/speech interpretation

7:30 pm: Grand Ceremony begins

Multiple drum units start the ceremony with impact as words fill the air setting the tone for the event . . . Freedom

Roanoke Symphony and Chorus are on steps of Portico to provide song and music to punctuate remarks

Multi-media presentation. Ideas include:

- Native American Honor Dance
- Images from the most recent Naturalization Ceremonies with audio of the Oath of Citizenship and reflections
- *“What does freedom mean?”* Performances/readings by interpreters, woven together in a tapestry to show the many perspectives of freedom: Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, Frederick Douglass, Patrick Henry, words from Indigenous Tribes, new Americans.

Keynote remarks by dignitaries: Freedom and the promise of the 250th (inspire, engage, educate). Share the story of our imperfect start, challenges and victories. Forming a more perfect Union and the value of citizenship

Finale with fireworks

Tentative Budget: \$250,000+

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| SB Cox | \$ 3,500 |
| Commonwealth Events | \$ 11,000 |
| BVC Communications | \$ 100,000 |
| Photographer | \$ 1,500 |
| Virginia Arts Festival | \$ 20,000 |
| Roanoke Symphony | \$ 35,000 |
| Entertainment/talent fees | \$ 100,000 |